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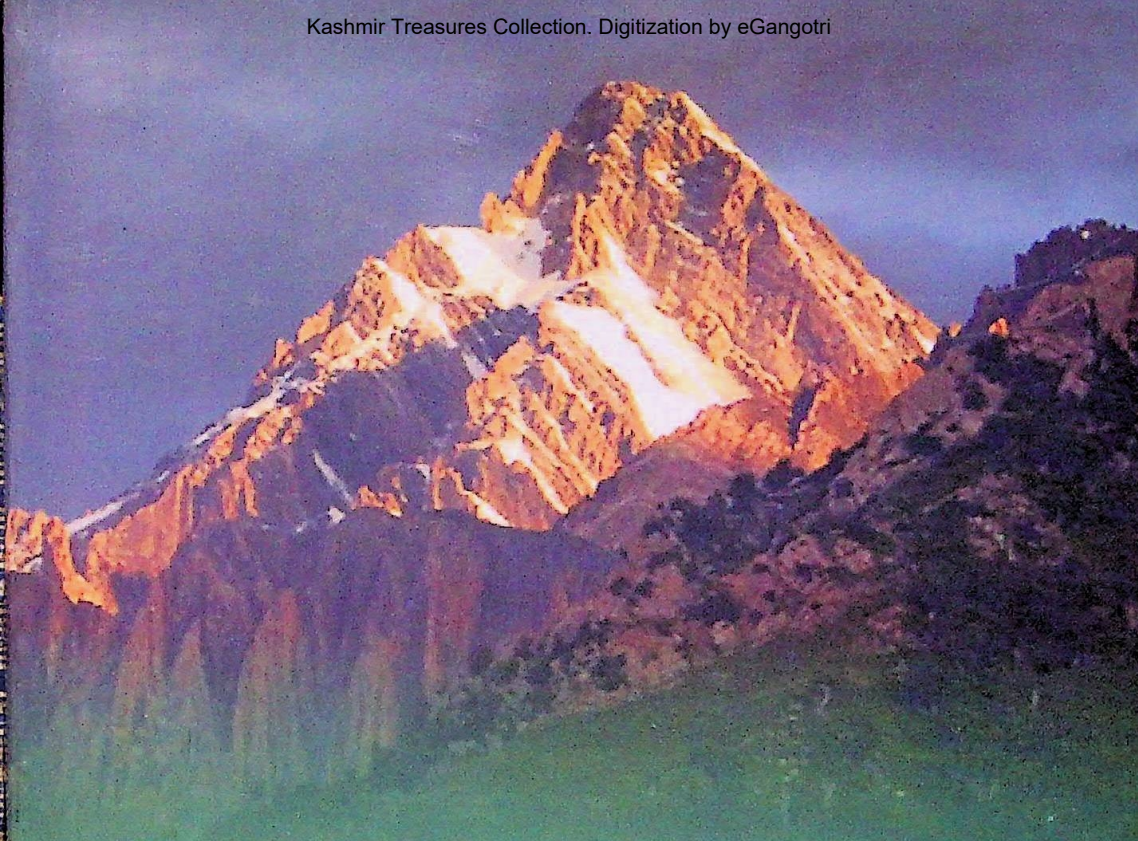

MOVED ON!

From Kashgar to Kashmir

P.S. Nazaroff

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MOVED ON!
FROM
KASHGAR
TO
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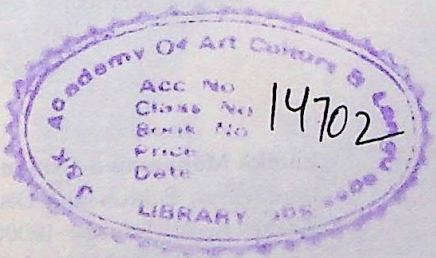

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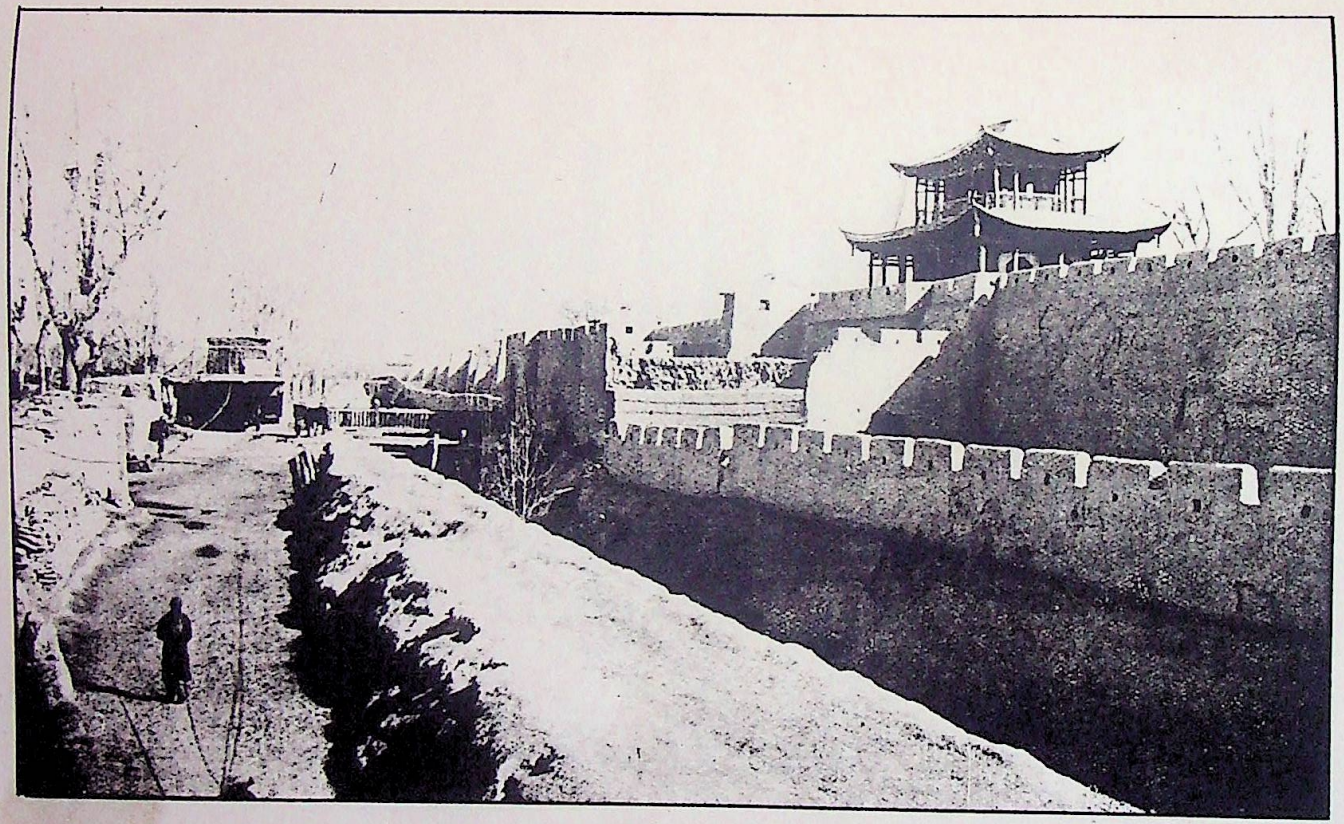

KASHGAR GATE, YARKAND

[*Photo by C. P. Skrine*

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DEDICATED

TO

MRS. SKRINE

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY

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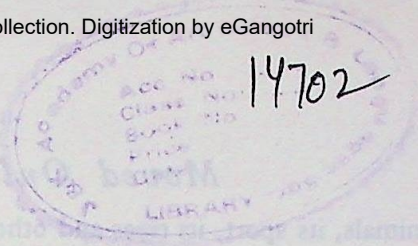

INTRODUCTION

FORTITUDE through escapes and thrills which would have broken a lesser man, erudition, knowledge, sportsmanship, an observant eye, sly humour, and vivid pen have won Pavel Stepanovich Nazároff a wide circle of admirers not only in Great Britain, but in the dominions overseas, in all places where manly qualities are recognized and esteemed.

Having invited British military co-operation against the Bolshevik revolution in Turkestan, and taken an active part in the rising against them in 1918, he was mercilessly hunted by the eventually successful Soviets. Hiding from them in the mountains and forests for two years, evading every attempt at capture, he succeeded, after a crushing rebuff, in making his way into Kashgar, chief city of Chinese Turkestan, where he lived in peace among friends for four years.

Recent stirring events in Chinese Turkestan, or Sin Kiang, the rebellion of the Tungans, the civil war, the death of many British subjects, the wounding of the wife of the British Consul-General, have attracted wide attention to this Land of Lost Civilization, as the author calls it, and his intimate account of land and people must be read with exceptional interest. Our existing descriptions are mostly by English writers, many of whom know the country well, but here the author gives us a picture rather from within, for he was scarcely a foreigner when he arrived. He had, in fact, lived over thirty years in Central Asia, the greater part in Russian Turkestan, which is inhabited also by Sarts and Kirghiz barely differing from those of Kashgar in customs and dialect. We see the people from the eyes of an accomplished Russian, just as we see the country,

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its animals, its sport, its trees and other plants, and also its minerals, from a naturalist who writes with authority.

When at length the Chinese Government recognized the Bolsheviks and a Soviet Consulate-General was opened in Kashgar, Nazároff, finding his sanctuary gone, was obliged to flee once more. He was moved on. Then he gives us a detailed and intensely interesting account of his journey through Yarkand and other cities of Sin Kiang, through the desolate heights of the Kuen Lun, over the Karakoram, the Roof of the World, Ladak and Western Tibet, down to Kashmir, until he finds once more a welcome and a refuge among his British friends.

And so he arrives in Kashmir, having journeyed originally from Russia, half-way across Asia, by the same means of travel as those employed by Marco Polo. As one critic has observed, the writings of Nazároff read like a blend between those of the great Venetian traveller and the *Arabian Nights*. And every word is true.

Those who learn through this book to esteem the man who wrote it, and wish to hear more of those extraordinary adventures which eventually brought him to Srinagar, and appreciate the comment of *The Times Literary Supplement*, that "it demands a readjustment of all standards of the last generation to realize that, in certain conditions, a Doctor of Philosophy may regard Chinese Turkestan as a place for a rest cure," they should read his earlier work, *Hunted through Central Asia.**

Most of the illustrations have been selected from the wonderful collection of photographs of Chinese Turkestan made by Mr. C. P. Skrine, to whom the author is under an unending obligation.

MALCOLM BURR

UNITED UNIVERSITY CLUB
August 1934

* Blackwood and Sons.

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PART I

THE LAND OF LOST CIVILIZATION

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CHAPTER I

Kashgar—Early contacts—Why I went there—The ancient city, its surroundings, costumes, and noises—Am consulted by Chinese—Chinese ladies—Processions—Prayers for rain . . . and the results —Augurs—Funerals

FEW are the spots in this world so difficult of access as Kashgaria, that is Chinese, or Eastern, Turkestan. Even aeroplanes, which do not fear the snowy deserts of the poles, and penetrate the innermost recesses of the Dark Continent, have barely reached this happy land. Here, in the very heart of Asia, surrounded by the loftiest mountains and most terrible deserts in the world, there are neither railways, nor roads for motor-cars, and the traveller who wishes to reach the country has no choice but to adopt the age-old conveyance of our ancestors—the back of a horse or a camel.

And when he arrives he will come upon the strange mediaeval life of bygone days, a population crystallized in all details of its daily existence through the centuries, towns surrounded by ancient embattlemented walls, the gates shut at night and the keys of the city handed to the appropriate authority for custody till the morning. There the traveller will see no lofty factory chimneys, nor will he hear the roar of machinery, nor the whir of wheels, nor scream of the steam whistle, nor meet the uniform population of industrial towns, nor unemployed, though he may observe not a few quietly sitting looking on, engaged in doing nothing, and some half-naked beggars, with a flower behind the ear, perhaps even on horseback.

This strange land is no small one. It covers an area of three hundred and fifty thousand square miles, of which, however, at the present day only one and a half per cent is available for cultivation.

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Moved On!

Contemporary European civilization has hardly touched this isolated country, but buried beneath the sands of its immense and waterless deserts there lie the remains of an ancient, highly developed, but very peculiar, culture, remarkable works of art and extensive libraries with priceless manuscripts in numerous languages of the ancient world. At that remote age, when Christian civilization had scarcely dawned in Europe, when Saint Jerome* wrote of Britain as follows: "When I was a boy in Gaul, I beheld the Scots, a people living in Britain, eating human flesh, and although there was plenty of cattle and sheep at their disposal, yet they would prefer a ham of the herdsman, or a slice of female breast," at a time when the west of Europe had not yet emerged from barbarism, in the land where these waterless deserts now lay, a lofty culture was producing works of art, and men were studying the ancient philosophies of India and Greece, devotees of faiths full of elevated sentiments and humanity, of Zoroaster and of Gautama Buddha. The ancient history of Kashgaria is closely connected with that of Old Persia, although cut off by great distances and the enormous mountain ranges of the Pamir, the Roof of the World.

The first European to reach this mysterious land, then unknown to Europe, was the unfortunate Adolf Schlagintweit, who arrived in Kashgar from India in 1857, having come through Kashmir, the Himalayas, the Karakoram and Kuen Lun. He had the misfortune to arrive when the country had been "liberated from the Chinese yoke" by Moslem Tartars led by the Hodja Wali Khan. After undergoing prolonged torture, the unfortunate scientist was beheaded in the Horse Market, and his head put on a pyramid of skulls of other wretches who had met the same fate.

* Quoted by Rev. D. Crawford, F.R.G.S., in *Thinking Black*, published by Morgan & Scott, Ltd., London.

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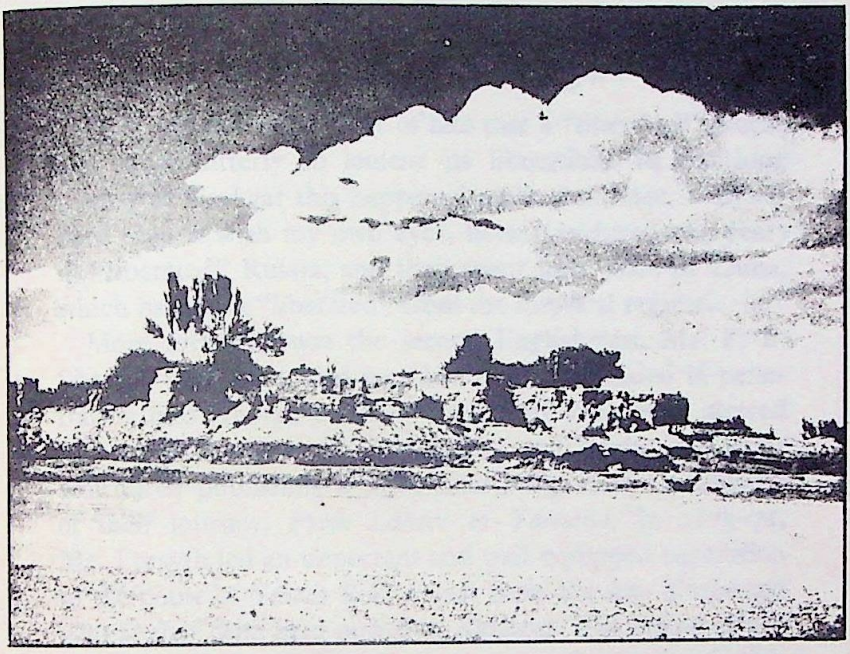

ON THE TIUMEN SU, KASHGAR DISTRICT

BAZAAR CROWDS AND PERFORMING GOAT, KASHGAR

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In Exile in Kashgar

How often it is the irony of fate that a "liberated" people has cause bitterly to lament its liberation! In the long history of Kashgar this happened more than once. I myself have seen it with my own eyes, having endured two years in "liberated" Russia, and then spent four years in China, which had been "liberated" from the imperial regime.

More fortunate was the second Englishman, Mr. P. B. Shaw, a tea-planter and merchant, who succeeded in penetrating into Khotan in 1868. Two years later there arrived Messrs. F. D. Forsyth, Henderson, and Hume, the latter afterwards publishing a most interesting scientific account of their journey, *From Lahore to Yarkand.* In 1873–74, Mr. Forsyth led an important and well-equipped expedition to the court of Yakub Bek, a Sart from Russian Turkestan who at that time held power in Kashgar. The object of the expedition was to conclude a commercial treaty with this adventurer. There were three scientific members of the expedition, Dr. Stoliczka, geologist, H. W. Bellew, ethnographist, and J. Biddulph, the naturalist. The expedition brought back highly valuable material for the study of the mysterious land of Altishahr, as Kashgaria was once known, so long forbidden to Europeans, to whom it revealed a new world in the heart of Asia. Unfortunately, the expedition suffered the serious loss of Dr. Stoliczka, who was the first to report to science on the geology of the country. On the return journey he could not stand the rarefied atmosphere of the plateau of the Karakoram, the loftiest in the world, and succumbed to paralysis of the heart.

About the same time Kashgaria was opened up also from the other side. One of the first Russians to arrive was General Kuropatkin, at that time a captain on the General Staff.

The storm of revolution, sweeping over Russia, scattering the educated classes through all the countries of the globe

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threw me up on to this mournful, desert, but yet highly interesting, land.

I had a very fair idea of what life in Kashgar was like from the accounts of travellers. Prior to the revolution, it was possible to reach the town of Andijan in Ferghaná, terminus of the Turkestan railway system, in ten days from London, and to reach Kashgar in from twelve to fourteen days ride from there. But now this route is closed and Kashgar once more isolated from the civilized world. It takes a two months ride over the Roof of the World to reach there from India, or six months of wearisome travel through the desert of Gobi from Pekin, with the probability of being robbed by Chinese brigands, or worse, or being caught by the long severe winter with its fearful blizzards; in which case the journey may well last a whole year.

Kashgar has been the starting-point of several scientific expeditions engaged in investigating the secrets of the mysterious regions in the heart of Asia. Przewalski, Kozloff, Roborovski, Sven Hedin, Sir Aurel Stein, Dr. von Le Coq, and other famous travellers have been there.

Through these same gates, seven hundred years ago, Marco Polo rode into the half-fabulous land of Cathay. He was astonished by the marvels that he saw. "The people of Kashgar," he wrote, "have an astonishing acquaintance with the devilries of enchantment, inasmuch as they make their idols to speak. They can also by their sorceries bring about changes of weather, and produce darkness, and do a number of things so extraordinary that no one without seeing them would believe them."

Such a land, of course, attracted me from my earliest years, and I longed to see with my own eyes the strangeness of its nature, the little known animals, all the remarkable phenomena offered by this region encircled by impassable deserts and the loftiest mountains in the world. It opened

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up the road to the exploration of distant Tibet and of India itself. It was from here, according to the accepted beliefs, from the unknown bowels of Asia, as from a volcano, that were flung the torrents of mankind, the countless hordes of barbarians who destroyed the civilization of Europe and laid waste the prosperous and cultured lands of the old world of the west.

Had they not taught us in our schooldays, that our ancestors the Aryans came from Ariavartha, the ancient Sanskrit name of the region known to-day, as a cluster of lofty crests, knotted in the Hindu Kush, the Kogh-i-Kaf of oriental writers, the Caucasus of the writers of ancient Greece, the original home of the so-called "Caucasian Race" of mankind?

There stood I upon the threshold, in the city of Kashgar itself, not as a traveller, not as a scientific explorer or mere tourist, but as a poor devil of a refugee, driven out of the socialist paradise of the Bolsheviks, having lost my fatherland, my family, my home, my property, left without a farthing.

Here I found the Russo-Asiatic Bank, and, as I was an old client, the manager of the branch kindly placed a room at my disposal. The building is situated outside the city walls, not far from the river Tiumen, on the banks of which the ancient city stands.

When I settled my account with the Kirghiz who had brought me through the manifold difficulties and dangers of the journey, I was left without any money at all, and I had at once to look around to find some work to do in order to earn my existence. The possibility of staying permanently in Kashgar for the rest of my life never entered my head, yet to find work in my own line seemed hardly likely or even possible, and so my thoughts kept turning southwards, where, on a clear day, in the far distance one could discern

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the snowy peaks of Kuen Lun. Beyond the mountain deserts of the Karakoram and the whole series of crests of the Himalayas lay Kashmir, the land of poetry, the romantic threshold of distant India, where there still were civilized men and women, whence opened up broad highways to every part of the globe.

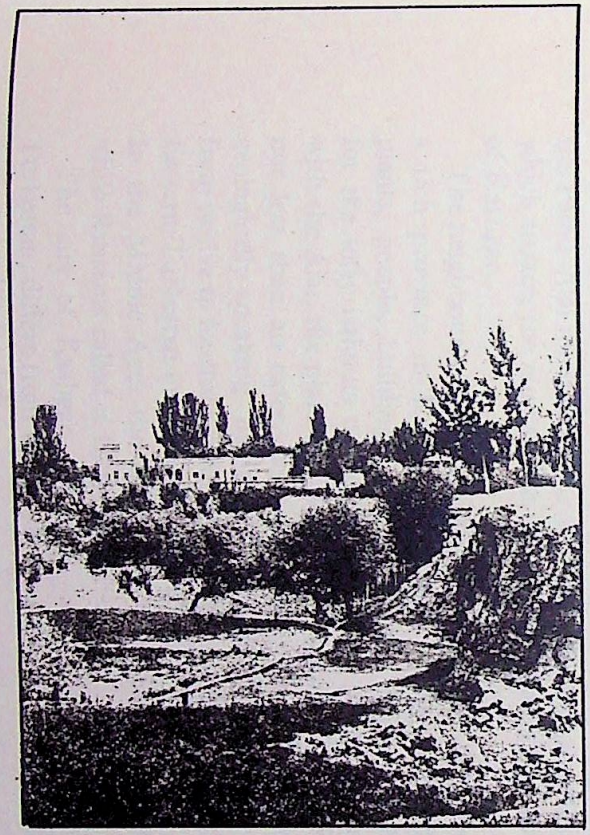
One evening I walked out to the banks of the river. They were thronged with people and animals. Men were bathing and washing their horses. Groups of donkeys, each loaded with a pair of specially designed barrels, waded in up to their girths, one after another, and stood calmly waiting while their barrels were filled with water. Along the road leading from the gates to the river men were driving a string of gaunt horses with their pack-saddles still on their backs.

"*Ka-irdan atliar kelgan?*" ("Whence have these horses come?") I asked their driver.

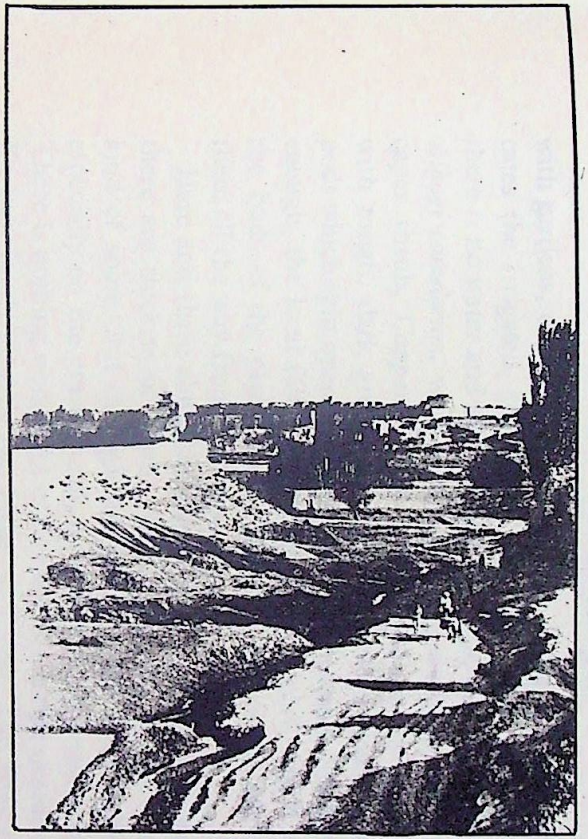
"*Srinagardan,*" he replied proudly, "Srinagar-*dan!*"

My heart gave a leap of joy. It was the first time I had heard pronounced aloud the name of Srinagar, capital of Kashmir, which to me had hitherto been but an empty, geographical expression. Now I was within the radius of its influence, looking at horses which had but this day arrived with heavy loads from the abundant land of Lalla Rookh, over the ice-bound passes of the Himalayas, through the lifeless deserts of the Karakoram, studded with the bones of beasts that had perished by the wayside, to mark the route for future travellers.

Properly speaking, the whole vast plain in which the city of Kashgar stands with its surrounding towns and villages is nothing but a desert, for even the banks of the rivers which flow through it, the Tiumen, the Kizil-Su and Gez, are dead and barren. Only where men have dug canals and organized artificial irrigation does grass grow, and trees,



THE BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL IN KASHGAR



THE APPROACH TO KASHGAR

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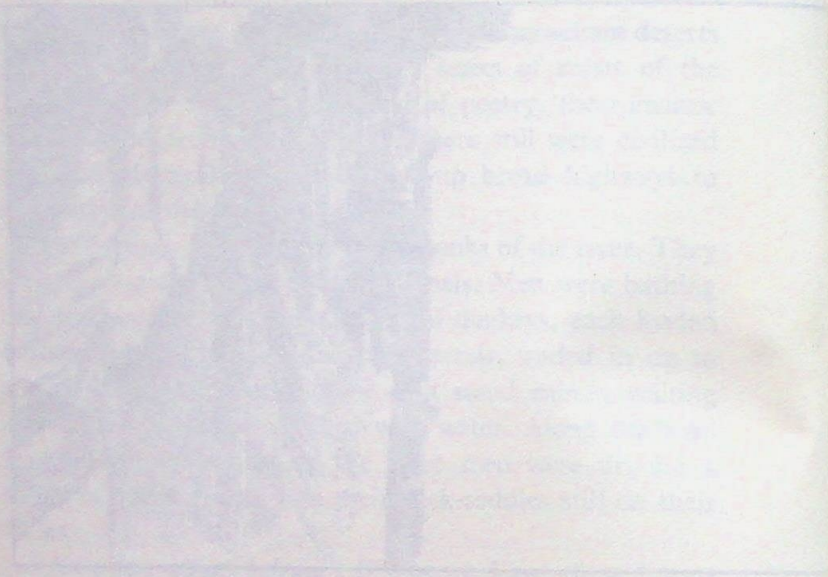

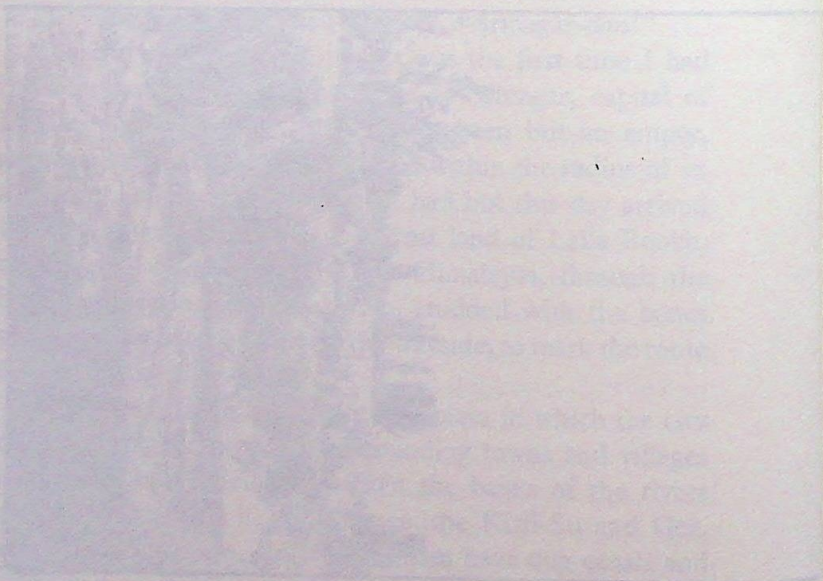

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with gardens, orchards and vineyards. A sharp line demarcates the irrigated, the desert from the sown. Beyond it there is no water and nothing will grow but the camel grass, *Alhagi camelorum*, with roots that go down deep, and the caper shrub, *Capparis spinosa*, sprawling on the ground, with tough, dark green leaves, pretty white flowers, and pods which split open to expose a crimson interior. Strangely enough, the local folk do not collect the capers, which are the buds of the plant, and Chinese gastronomers import them all the way from Shanghai.

Here and there along the banks of the canals or streams there are thickets of thorns, inextricable masses of every kind of spine. But through the greater part of the valley, especially on the gravelly soil, nothing whatever will grow. There is nothing wonderful in that, for the whole rainfall of Kashgar rarely exceeds two inches in a year. The moisture comes all the way from the Atlantic and the lofty heights of the Pamir-Alai mountain system act as a gigantic condenser which attracts the rain, so that very little is left for the plain of Kashgar.

The neighbourhood reminded me very much of Ferghaná, a rich province in Russian Turkestan. Nature, animals, plants, people, buildings, all were much the same. But for the lofty isthmus connecting the range of Tian Shan with the Alai, the plain of Kashgar would be nothing more nor less than an extension of Ferghaná, as it is in fact, geologically speaking. But this isthmus attains a height of from twelve to fourteen thousand feet, a fact which has given Eastern Turkestan a totally different destiny from Western. In the Middle Ages the country was known as Uiguria, while Russians called it Little Bukhara.

The city of Kashgar, like the other cities of Eastern Turkestan, differs from the native towns of Russian Turkestan only by its lofty, massive walls, with towers and

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ponderous gates, which give it a mediaeval appearance. The streets, of course, are narrow, the houses dull, built with two or three floors, of unburnt bricks or else of daub and wattle. The roofs are flat, made of reeds covered with clay. Sometimes the walls of the houses are so thin that when a man with a heavy load goes upstairs, the whole building is shaken to the foundations. It is hardly surprising that at times of really heavy rain, fortunately a rare occurrence in the region, entire buildings may collapse, come crashing down and bury the unfortunate inmates. This form of architecture has clearly come down from the most ancient times, as Sir Aurel Stein's excavations have revealed. This explains the disappearance from the face of the earth of whole cities in Central Asia, leaving hardly a trace. Only where buildings have been buried under the dry shifting sand of the desert have any works of art been saved, as frescoes, tissues, and so on. Many remains of ancient civilizations have been so wonderfully preserved in this way; temples and extensive buildings have been excavated in the thick deposits of loess on the dry banks of rivers and on the slopes of the mountains.

The European quarter is outside the walls. The old Russian offices, bank buildings, the British and Russian Consulates, and Swedish Mission are all situated in the belt of gardens and cultivated land which surrounds the city for a considerable distance. During the summer heat the air inside the city becomes intolerable, and the great mass of inhabitants move outside and live in their gardens and fields, even the poorest whose estate does not exceed one acre. It costs hardly anything to run up a hut of clay, or they may put up a flimsy framework of willow branches and plant pumpkins round them. These grow up very quickly and cover the walls of the hut with the shade of their green leaves and pleasing white flowers, and in

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the autumn provide big, light gourds for containing water, milk, oil, or other fluids, with a capacity up to a gallon.

The natives of Kashgar are very fond of flowers and grow them wherever they can, sometimes in the very doorway of their little shops which open out directly on to the road. Often enough you may see a beggar with a rose stuck in his cap. Their favourite is the oleander, grown in pots. The Chinese officials grow the lotus in specially prepared small basins. Very common here is *Cosmia*, a tall, pretty plant carrying large flowers of different colours. It is very rare in Europe, but in the gardens of Europeans in Central Africa it has become a weed.

The outward appearance of the crowd in Kashgar is much brighter and more variegated than in Russian Turkestan. In Khiva, for instance, all men, from the khan himself down to the common labourer, are dressed alike in a long cloak or *halat* of identical cut and same dark red colour and the same high lambskin caps; only indoors is it permitted to wear brighter and expensive *halats*. The Turcomans dress in the same way. In Bukhara and Samarkand the costume of the crowd presents a variegated and brilliant scene, the *halats* of different colours with striking patterns and designs, especially rich men and officials who have them of expensive woollen and silken materials, but as the Shariat forbids the Faithful to indulge in luxury, an expensive *halat* is always lined with the cheapest kind of calico, so that the Prophet has no grounds to reproach his True Believers with wearing really luxurious apparel. The head-dress of men in Bukhara and Samarkand, *sallia*, is a white turban of thin Indian muslin, the token of learned or spiritual dignity. In other parts of Turkestan only mullahs wear the turban or at least put it on only on ceremonial occasions, just like a European with his silk hat. In Tashkent

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and Ferghaná the dress of the populace is quieter and more modest and the *halats* are always of dark colour.

In Kashgar *halats* are of brighter colours, while on the head is worn either a small, brilliantly-coloured skullcap called *tiubitei* or a conical felt hat of the Kirghiz design.

The fair sex in Kashgar has been famous for ages for its frivolity and coquetry. Here you will seldom see the plain, dark greenish-grey *parandja*, the long cloak covering the entire form from head to foot which is obligatory on all women and girls in Russian Turkestan, or the black horse-hair veil, the *chimbet*, which completely covers the face. The ladies of Kashgar wear short, bright *halats* of different colours and all kinds of material including silk and velvet. On their heads they wear either variegated *tiubitei*, often enough embroidered with gold thread, or conical velvet hats embroided with fur. Their faces are covered with light veils of different colours. The traveller is at once struck by the degree of emancipation of the women here, compared with those of Russian Turkestan. It is by no means a rare sight to see a woman selling something in the bazaar, a thing that would be quite impossible in puritanical Samarkand or Bukhara, the very centre of Moslem learning and devotion. They say that it is only during the past few decades that the standard of morals has become stricter, relatively speaking of course, under the influence of mullahs from Russian Turkestan. Previously the ladies of Kashgar did not even veil their faces at all, and their moral standard was more free and easy than it is to-day. For the preservation of the standard of morals and the sanctity of the family hearth, during the reign of Yakub Bek (1865–1876) a law was promulgated by which every visitor who came to the country without a wife was given three days in which to find one or leave. For the convenience of visitors, brides paraded in the bazaar every morning, selling milk. There

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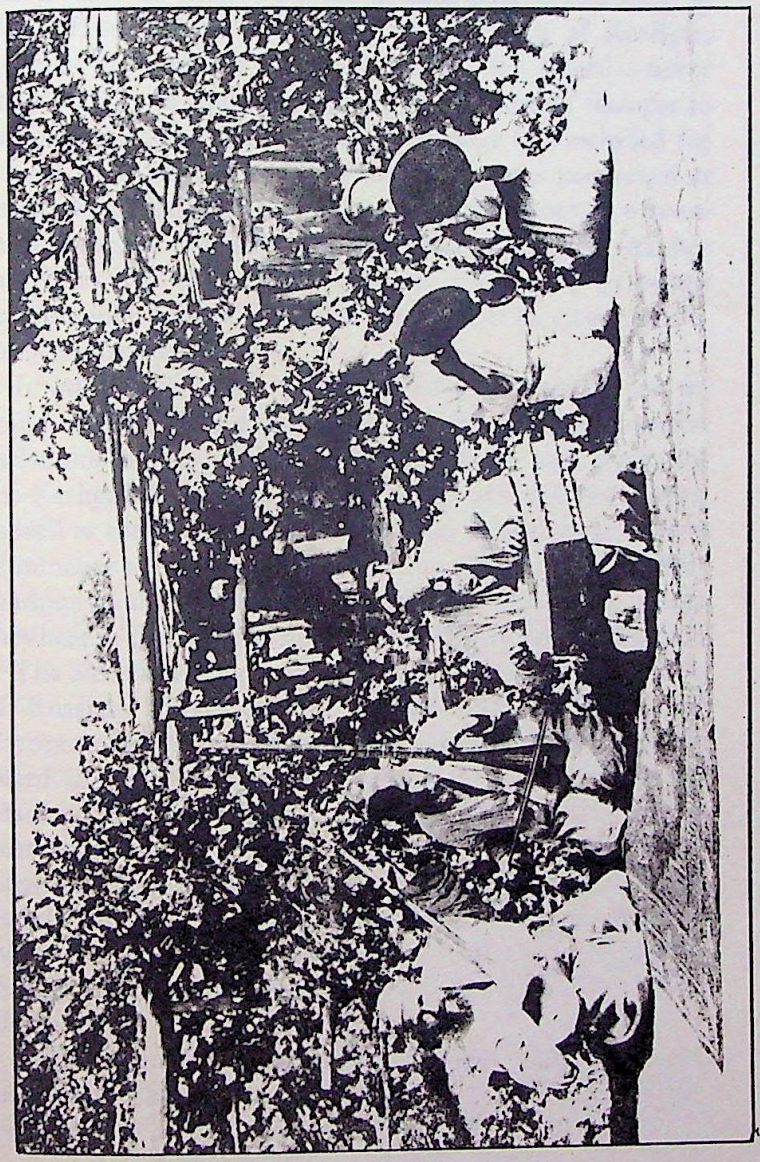

SART MUSICIANS

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was no lack of choice. To the present day, in the town of Yangi Hissar, forty-three miles to the south of Kashgar, a part of the bazaar is allotted to such brides. There is never any difficulty in finding a mullah in the nearest mosque to perform the ceremony. If such a marriage is concluded for a fixed short period, after the inevitable *palau* consumed at the wedding feast, the mullah reads the ceremony of divorce in advance, to simplify matters. The uncertainty whether marriage was compulsory also on Europeans provoked considerable interest in India among the members of the Forsyth Expedition.

In our garden, under the shade of the lofty poplars, we could constantly hear the scream of the kites, the curious melodious warble of the Chinese geese, the dull cooing of the Kashgar doves, and the song of the starlings. The latter, as well as their own characteristic note, have notable powers of mimicry and imitate the cry of the plover, the whistle of sandpipers and the melodious piping of the oriole, which they hear in the marshy springs around when they go to drink.

The Sarts of Kashgar, in marked contrast to their kinsmen of Russian Turkestan, are musical and easily pick up European airs. Frequently their simple folk songs are to be heard in the streets, where more than once I heard the Marseillaise. They have a pleasing little song which is heard only when they are threshing corn, driving their oxen, donkeys or horses. Occasionally one hears a sound exactly like that of a huntsman's horn. That means that the owner of one of their primitive mills is informing the public that his plant is disengaged and they may bring their grain for grinding.

In the morning and evening there rings through the air the call of the muezzin summoning the Faithful to the Mosque,

Allah bismillah! il' rahim, il' rahman!

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Here it is called in a special way; it is as though an inexpressibly sad, mournful, grief rings through the high tremolo of this call to prayer.

Such are the musical sounds around the city. In the town itself there are to be heard only the noises of the bazaar, the neighing of horses and all-pervading bray of the donkeys. In the summer, when the apricots are ripe and there is an interval in the operations in the fields, the natives of the surrounding villages come into town to visit the tomb of the saint Hodja Apak. They nearly all ride on asses and for a few nights all sounds are drowned and sleep banished by the universal and perpetual braying. For here the ass is the beast of all work, grazing, harrowing, carrying corn, water, bricks, stones, firewood, timber, and so on. Often you may meet in the roads an enormous stack of straw or brushwood moving towards you; this is a tiny donkey completely hidden by its load.

There is, too, another mysterious noise which puzzled me for a long time. It is a pleasant, melodious, soft sound, something like that of the Aeolian harp, but louder. It comes down from the clear blue sky when the air is still, especially in the mornings. It seems to radiate from above, in the air, and gradually die away, like some celestial pan-pipes. It was only after I had lived many months in Kashgar that I traced these melodious and mysterious sounds to their source. The folk of Kashgar are great pigeon-fanciers and go in for breeding these birds on a large scale. They are fond of tying little reed-pipes to the tails of some of the stronger birds. When they fly high and come down rapidly or tumble in the air these curious pipings resound from the sky.

The autumn approaches imperceptibly in Kashgar, the nicest time of year here. The temperature of the air gradually drops; the nights become cool and fresh, and quantities of

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grapes and luscious melons appear for sale in the bazaar, and over the streams in the evenings flocks of wild duck make their appearance. The sky becomes clear and blue, the air dry and transparent, and the lofty pinnacles of Kungur (25,200 feet) and jagged crest of Chakragil (22,070 feet) are visible far away to the west, and in the mornings away to the south one can distinguish the misty outline of Kuen Lun, the Mountain of Heaven.

I used to go out shooting with my Russian friends to different lakes when flocks of wild duck put in an appearance, although as yet only local species. In the winter they arrive here from the east, from the lake of Maral Bashi, where in the summer they find better feeding-grounds, but in winter the water freezes there, so the duck fly to Kashgar, where they meet friends from the far north. The shooting itself was not particularly interesting, but I was glad to have an opportunity of seeing something of the Kashgar plain. Nature here is poor and mournful. It is but a pale reflection of the riches of nature in Western Turkestan, with its great abundance and variety of bird life. On every side is desert, with the soil saturated with salt, where man, with endless pains, has succeeded in winning for cultivation every available scrap of land by means of irrigation. One cannot help wondering at what period and from what motive man first put in his appearance in this uninviting valley with its infertile soil. What was it that drove him here and made him build up this great system of canals to irrigate the dry and saline ground, when to the north, not too far away, beyond the range of Tian Shan, there are the luxuriant grassy steppes with splendid fertile soil, where no artificial irrigation is necessary and yet the land still free and but sparsely inhabited.

The whole plain of Kashgar is very short of water, and the Chinese authorities are always on the look out for

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fresh sources to irrigate the desert and so greatly enrich themselves. .

One day a Chinese official came to see me in this connection and made a little speech in a mysterious tone of voice in quite good Russian to the following effect:

"You are an engineer. Can you make a tunnel in a mountain?"

"That depends on the mountain and on the size of the tunnel," I answered.

"The mountain is not a big one, but still it is not a very small one," he replied evasively.

"And what do you want to drive the tunnel for?" I asked.

"Well, you see," he said, lowering his voice to a whisper, "there is a place in the mountains where there is a big lake and not far off beyond the mountain there is a river in which there is very little water. If we drive a tunnel through the mountain we can let the waters of the lake into the river, and then we can irrigate a huge area which is now simply useless."

"But how do you know that the water of the lake would run into the river? Of course, we should have to go into the matter first," I explained to him, "and make a survey; we should have to run a level and determine the quantity of water available from the lake."

"Could you do this?" he asked.

"Of course I could," I answered, "but I should want the necessary instruments for measuring the flow of the water, a level, theodolite, and so on. Have you got any?"

"No, we haven't any instruments," he replied, "but we have some very good *usti*, that is, craftsmen, who could make you any instruments you want, even a lock, or could mend a sewing-machine."

"I'm afraid your *usti* could hardly make the surveying

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instruments I should want," I answered with a smile. "You would have to send for them from England."

"What would they cost?"

"Oh, about a thousand *sar*,* I dare say; hardly less," I said.

"Good heavens!" he cried in astonishment. "We didn't think the whole tunnel would cost as much as that!"

So that was the end of that irrigation scheme.

The Chinese authorities are extraordinarily mean in their expenditure on matters of public need, and always try to make the population do the work for nothing. Besides, the first problem in the mind of any Chinaman is to see what profit he can get out of it for himself. The work of an engineer or other specialist they rank with that of their precious *usti*, their artisans, carpenters, joiners, and so on.

About fifty miles west of Kashgar there is a mine yielding an excellent free-smelting ore, from which the Chinese smelt copper used in minting their coinage. There is a mint in Kashgar, where formerly they used to strike a silver currency from metal supplied by the Russo-Asiatic Bank, but now they confine themselves to a copper currency, and do not make a very successful job of that. The copper comes out brittle and the coins often crack in the process. The local *usti* have been puzzling their heads on the problem for a long time, and many a flogging have the "experts" of the mint had for their failure, but it has made no difference, and the copper continues to crack. The manager of the mint, a charming and well-educated Chinaman named Mr. Lu, although he did not know a single word of any foreign language and could speak only Chinese and Turki, had given a Russian education to his children. He had a boy of twelve and a girl of fifteen, both of whom spoke excellent Russian; the girl read Russian books and papers with ease, and was

* A local coin worth at that time about 2s. 3d.

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acquainted with the leading works of our great writers. I believe she was the only Chinese girl in the whole of the vast province of Sin Kiang who had a European education.

One morning three Chinese officials paid me a visit, bringing with them Mr. Lu's little boy as interpreter. After the usual greetings and compliments the boy struck an attitude and began his speech.

"Mr. Nazároff," he said. "You are a clever and learned man, and we have come to ask your invaluable advice."

This formal exordium puzzled me a good deal, and I was at a loss to know what kind of advice I could give this deputation. But it turned out not to be anything very wonderful. They brought me samples of copper and a few coins with cracks in them and wanted to know the cause of the defect. I examined the samples and saw at once that the trouble was due to the inclusion of a high proportion of the oxide in the metal. Evidently the Chinese *usti* did not know how to refine copper, and their ovens were not adapted for the purpose.

"Your copper is excellent," I told them, "but not clean enough. I should have to have a look at your ovens and then I could tell you how to put the trouble right."

To my surprise, they looked very confused. Muttering something between themselves, they gave some instructions to the boy, who again struck an attitude and began to speak.

"Our mint is very badly built," he said; "it is dirty and full of rubbish, and we simply could not show it in its present condition to so important a person as yourself."

I laughed and explained that all that did not matter in the least, and would not interfere at all in an inspection of the mint and the plant; but they were obstinate, and I saw there was some other, hidden, reason why they did not want to show me their method of operation. I did not insist.

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With many protestations, excuses, compliments, and good wishes, they withdrew.

Three months later, that is, time enough for them to have received an answer from the Governor-General of the province of Sin Kiang, with permission to show their mint to a foreigner, I received from Mr. Lu an invitation to dinner.

After the usual excellent dinner of purely Chinese dishes which, as I learnt afterwards, had been specially prepared by Mrs. Lu herself, Mr. Lu invited me go with the other guests to see the mint. It was quite clear that during these three months they had been making preparations for the reception of the "important person" and given the premises a good clean-up.

Their method of cleaning the copper turned out to be just what I had expected. The metal itself was good and clean, but in the process of casting absorbed a quantity of oxygen from the air, and the Chinese artisans were not capable of the perfectly simple operation of preventing the oxidation of the metal. I explained what was the matter and offered to put the thing right, and to teach his men how to refine the copper. He overwhelmed me with expressions of gratitude, and said that he would think it well over.

I never heard another word about it. Evidently he decided that it was not worth while going to the trouble and expense. The easy-going population of Kashgar, in spite of their constant need of money, would have to put up with their badly produced coinage.

Mr. Lu's children occasionally visited Russian families. At Christmas and Easter they paid a round of visits, and they liked our Russian dainties, especially our Easter cake. No doubt a brilliant career awaits the boy, but the position of Miss Lu was really tragic. Thanks to her education, the whole new world of European life and culture was open to her, utterly foreign to her family and the other women of

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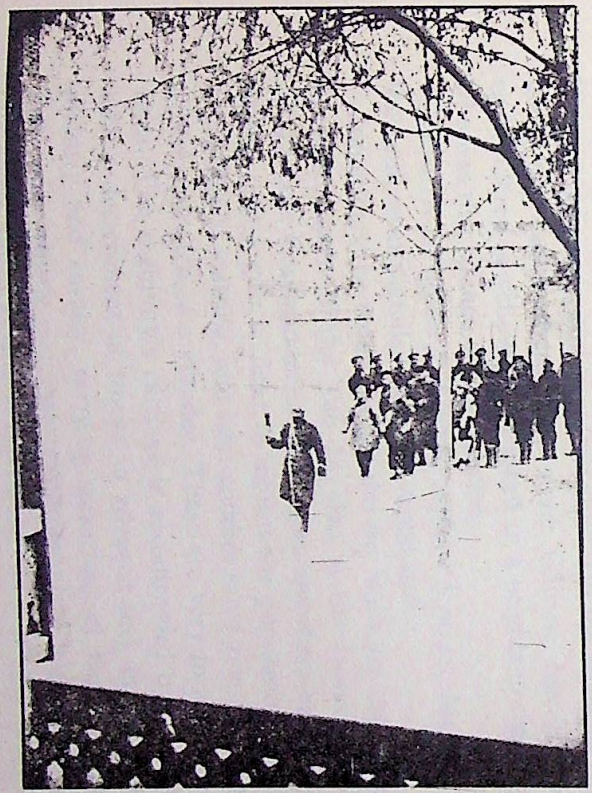
her milieu, who were totally ignorant and illiterate, crystallized in superstitions, prejudices and fantastic conceptions about the outer world. In this remote corner of the globe Chinese women lead a life of isolation in keeping with the tradition of antiquity. The young soul of this girl had been contaminated, so to speak, with the sweet poison of Europeanism. The perspective of being married to some coarse, ignorant Chinaman and being buried in the seclusion of a harem terrified this clever and cultivated girl. Fortunately, Mr. Lu understood the cravings of his daughter's soul, and was doing his best to be transferred with his family to Pekin, but I have not heard if he has been successful.

In theory, Chinese ladies, that is, the womenfolk of the well-to-do classes and officials, are completely isolated from masculine society, and etiquette strictly forbids them to marry foreigners. For this reason when Chinese ladies pay a visit to a European household special precautions are taken, which means that all the men have to stay away. Still, I did once have the opportunity of being present by chance at a tea-party of Russian and Chinese ladies. These did not make any protest at all at my presence, although it was such an infringement of their etiquette; they behaved in a perfectly natural way, laughing and chatting unconstrainedly, even being a little coquettish.

Of course, my presence gave a stimulus to the conversation, as several of the Chinese ladies spoke Turki quite well, while the Russian ladies did not know a word of it, or at the best spoke it hardly at all, so I acted as interpreter. As a rule, conversation was kept up with the help of Miss Lu. The Chinese ladies do not veil like the Mahomedan women, and their heavily painted faces and their black hair decorated with artificial flowers, looking extraordinarily like porcelain figures, may often be seen looking out of their *mapas* when they are out for a drive in the town.



CHINESE LADIES OF HIGH RANK CALLING AT CONSULATE GENERAL

KASHGARI WOMEN IN GALA DRESS

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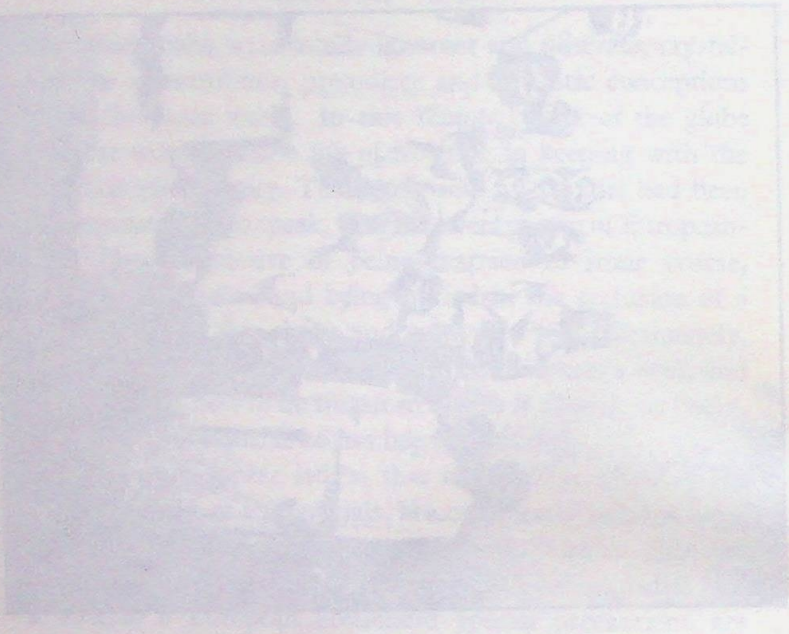

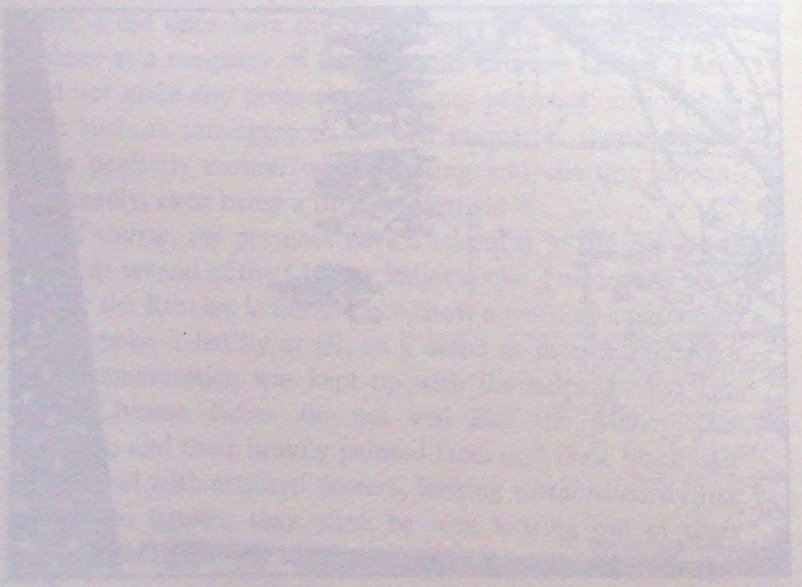

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Their outdoor costume, usually of black silk, consists of a jacket and trousers. When guests come into the room and stay there some little time, etiquette requires their hostess to invite them to take their trousers off, which they do willingly enough. They appear then in long skirts, just as we are accustomed to see in pictures of Chinese life. This costume is so masculine in appearance that it is often difficult to distinguish a girl from a boy, and old Chinamen, with their beardless faces, look just like old women.

One day, soon after my arrival at Kashgar, as I was walking down the street, I saw someone on horseback riding towards me. The horse's neck was hung with bells; on the saddle, perched on a mass of rugs, sat a girl, with long black hair hanging down her back, her cheeks flushed with rouge. When she passed me, she bowed slightly and greeted me with a charming and friendly smile.

"Oho!" thought I to myself, "how free and easy the Chinese ladies are, and how friendly!" On the lapels of her black silk jacket there were some Chinese hieroglyphs embroidered in yellow silk. I asked in a neighbouring shop who was this strange young Amazon.

"That is an officer," was the reply. "A young Manchu; they still wear pigtails," was the explanation.

Sometimes the roads outside the city walls are enlivened by processions. If the Tao In, that is the Governor, or Ti Tai, the Commander-in-Chief, goes anywhere on an the official visit a gun is fired to inform the population that a procession is starting, and later another salvo gives warning of the approach of a grandee. These are very formal occasions. The dignitary's carriage is accompanied by a band, with a detachment of troops in advance and, in the rear, infantry and cavalry, carrying quantities of flags; drums roll; pipes whistle piercingly; trumpets blare. The leitmotiv of Chinese music is easy to reproduce; all you have to do is

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to get a big copper tray with a crack in it and beat it with a stick. This shattering din is the foundation of Chinese music. During theatrical performances this particular noise punctuates every speech uttered by the hero.

I saw one splendid procession accompanying the senior wife of the Ti Tai and mother of the commandant of the citadel of Kashgar. At least two hundred men took part in it, either on foot or mounted, armed and unarmed, flag-carriers and musicians. A Chinaman in European costume wearing a billycock led a fine horse without a saddle. The great lady was riding from Kashgar to Yangi Hissar, a distance of five and a half miles.

A very fine procession marched round the town in a ring when they were praying for rain. This time, as well as the band, cavalry, infantry and flags, they carried a brilliantly shining bronze image under a special baldaquin; there were censer-bearers and priests, and for some reason or another they led a fine black horse, the favourite charger of the Tao In, who did not take part personally in the ceremony. The function of the horse in a religious procession was to represent the person of the Tao In, who, of course, had never heard that Caligula sent his favourite charger to preside at a meeting of the Senate. The idea must have entered his head spontaneously.

Prayers for rain are undertaken fairly often in winters when there is little snowfall on the mountains, and consequently a shortage of water in the rivers in the summer. There is no lack of rain in the Kashgar plain itself. As a rule the prayers for rain are conducted by the mullahs in the mosques, as all Kashgaria is a Mahommedan country. When a shortage of snow on the mountains is observed, the people send a deputation to the Tao In, who gives orders to the mullahs to pray for rain and snow. The ceremony follows a special ritual, in which they introduce the Stone

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of Heaven, a small meteorite which fell in the country very many years ago. I was disappointed that the mullahs refused to show me the stone. On specially important occasions Chinese prayers are ordered as well.

Once in the early spring, after a dry winter when very little snow had fallen on the mountains, instructions were given to the mullahs to make special prayers. In their excess of zeal the mullahs overdid it. Black clouds overhung the mountains for a long time and a tropical downpour crashed down upon the city, breaking down walls and destroying houses, when a good many people were crushed to death. The terrified population, in fear of further disasters, rushed to the Tao In with complaints against the mullahs for their excess.

The Governor, ever mindful of the needs of his beloved people, summoned the guilty mullahs and threatened to give them each a sound flogging if the rain did not stop at once. Such wisdom on the part of the energetic Governor was crowned with brilliant results. The prayers of the mullahs immediately stopped the excessive precipitation of atmospheric moisture and averted a further catastrophe.

This production of rain was doubtless one of the wonders witnessed by Marco Polo. There remains another relic of the days when Kashgar was a land of necromancers and sorcerers. I myself saw a pythoness who helped the inhabitants of Kashgar to discover criminals, to find stolen or lost property, who acted in fact the rôle of a sort of Delphic Oracle. She was an oldish woman of very ordinary appearance. When she prognosticated she sat on a low stool over a brazier with glowing charcoal and poured on to it seeds of a plant, *Peganum harmala*, which is a very important ingredient in all ceremonies of cleansing, preservation against the Evil Eye and so on, in Central Asia. The smoke of the burning seeds has an intoxicating effect and the prophetess

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falls into a trance, muttering words and phrases. The natives of Kashgar firmly believe in the virtues of the witch, whose services have the great advantage of being cheap, a seance costing only two *tengi*, that is about fourpence. As a matter of common justice, however, it is only fair to the woman to record that once, when a box of silver, worth about sixty pounds, disappeared from the Russo-Asiatic Bank in very enigmatical circumstances soon after its arrival, and when an exhaustive search failed to reveal it, someone in jest suggested trying the old oracle. They did so, and, acting on her indications, started digging in the yard of the bank and found the silver at once.

Sometimes a loud, crackling, but at the same time melancholy and lugubrious, music informs the world that the funeral of a rich Chinaman is passing. These processions are accompanied by a whole mass of paper models representing the property of the deceased, his house, his furniture, and so on. This was all burnt at the funeral and thus in spiritual form accompanied the soul of the departed to the other side. Clearly this is a survival from the times when a man's property was buried with him, including his wives, servants, and animals, as was done by the ancient Scythians, and the inhabitants of Ur in Mesopotamia as shown by recent excavations, and also, according to the Arab geographer Ibn Batut, among the ancient Russians. The funeral is celebrated also by fireworks, crackers, burning of herbs and candles. This is done to drive away evil spirits, belief in which never leaves the Chinaman all through his life. That is why he builds his home, especially his sleeping quarters, with various partitions and winding passages; it inspires him with terror at the thought of sleeping in the open. Before the gates of Chinese courts, there is always a wall running parallel with the gates at a little distance from it. An evil spirit could always fly in through an open door

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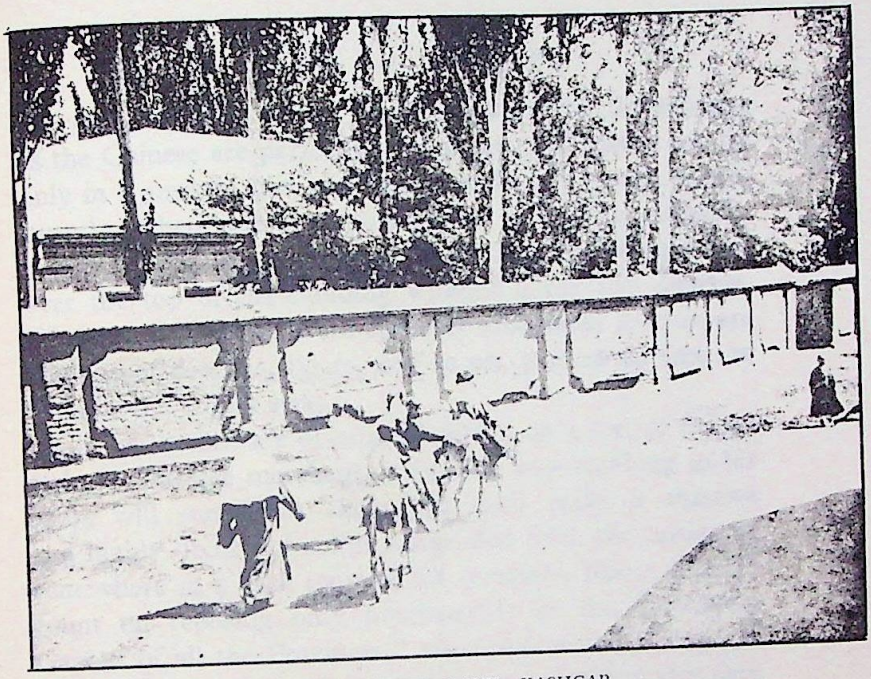

RUSSO-ASIATIC BANK, KASHGAR

GROUP OF CHINESE OFFICIALS, KASHGAR

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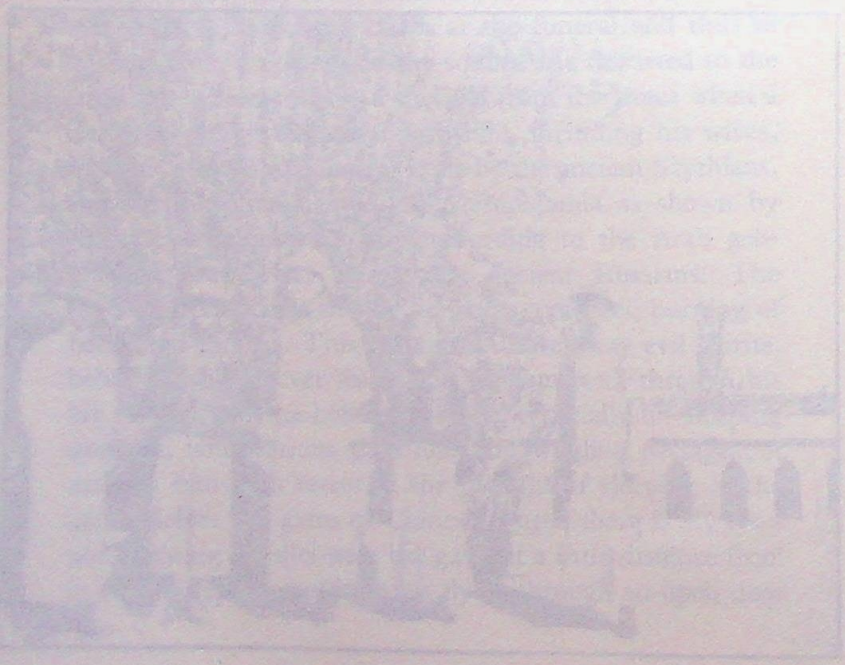

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and do some harm to the people in court, but fortunately, as the Chinese are perfectly well aware, evil spirits can fly only in a straight line and cannot make any turns; consequently, when one bumps into the protecting partition wall it is repelled, or else rises high into the air and flies over the top of the building without doing any damage. These protecting walls are specially efficacious if there are pictures of dragons, tigers, and so on, painted on them to frighten the spirits away.

Chinese coffins are of original design, in a sort of rococo style. A Chinese merchant, when you buy anything in his shop, will sometimes show you with pride a massive and highly decorated coffin, suspended from the ceiling or somewhere in a back room of his premises. Many of them count on reposing only provisionally in the "Common Garden of all the Provinces," according to the inscription over the gates of the Chinese cemetery, confident that they will soon be sent into China proper, to repose in the land of their fathers. Residence in the distant Mahommedan land of Kashgaria is for most Chinamen little short of exile.

A rather disagreable feature of Kashgar is that it is surrounded by cemeteries, modern, old, and ancient. Of the latter there are no signs left on the surface and the land is worked by the true believers and scattered on the fields for manure. The presence of half-rotten, decomposed bones does not bother the Sarts at all. What significance can there be in the bones of ancient sinners, probably most of them Kaffirs or Unbelievers? On the far side of the river, on the site of the old city, now washed away by erosion, there is the mausoleum over the tomb of a Buddhist saint in the form of a pyramid of unburnt bricks. This is a relic of pre-Mahommedan days.

When I went out of the house where I lived to go to the Russian Consulate, I used to have to pass

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two Mahommedan and one Chinese cemeteries. Sometimes I used to return home quite late, but never experienced the slightest feeling of embarrassment or shrinking. Still, I will admit that I would not care to go for a stroll at night in a Christian cemetery—so strong are the feelings implanted in us from boyhood. Yet in fact, does it make any difference what are the bodies that are lying in the ground?

Once, when going home late on a dark night and crossing the Mahommedan cemetery for the sake of a short cut, I saw in a distant corner a strange, feeble light that appeared to come out of the ground. I walked towards it and when I approached I could hear a low, restrained murmuring. It was only when I came quite close that I saw, in a tiny tent behind the grave, a mullah squatting in the dim light of a candle, reading the Koran over the grave of a groom from the British Consulate who had died that morning and, as customary, been buried at once.

These graveyards, the mournful, melancholy neighbourhood, the lifeless river flowing between naked, sandy banks, the scanty wild life, representing, as it were, a faint shadow of the wealth of Ferghaná, often induced in me a feeling of depression and sadness. My thoughts turned to the north, where, beyond the snow-clad crests of Tian Shan, was left everything that was due to me, that formed the whole of my life and existence. That was past for ever, never to return; my present position was melancholy and my future dim and uncertain, with no hope of happiness or well-being.

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CHAPTER II

The people of Kashgaria—The Sarts—The Chinese—Life in the city—Cruelty of the Chinese—Antiquities—Why did the ancient civilization disappear?—Early history—Modern history—Yakub Beg—Brother murders brother

PRIOR to the Bolshevik revolution and the abandonment by the Soviets of all extra-territorial privileges which Russian subjects had previously enjoyed in China, Kashgar had been economically nothing more nor less than part of Russian Turkestan. Russian influence had been extraordinarily great, and the most powerful personage in the place was, in fact, not the Chinese governor, but the Imperial Russian Consul.

Separated from the rest of China by vast deserts, and from India by almost impassable mountains, Kashgaria gravitated naturally towards Turkestan, where the road was not particularly difficult, and the existing railway opened up an easy road to the west, bringing Pekin itself within an easy journey of a couple of weeks. Besides, the population of the two provinces were almost identical in race, religion, and speech. Kashgar was flooded with inexpensive Russian products, cheap cotton goods being specially prized. The currency in circulation was practically exclusively Russian paper roubles, which sometimes even commanded a premium. It is curious that during the first few months after Russia's entry into the Great War the exchange value of the rouble did not fall, but actually rose, and it was only at the end of 1914 that it began to fall.

As by a treaty Russian goods entered free of duty and Russian subjects were exempt from taxation, and also from local jurisdiction, the natives showed the greatest anxiety to acquire Russian citizenship by fair means or foul. Trade with Russia afforded considerable profits to the merchants,

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while the poorer part of the population, migrating in the summer into Ferghaná in tens of thousands, brought back with them substantial earnings. Moreover, the mere possibility of the appearance in Kashgar of a regiment of Cossacks with mountain artillery within four or five days, to say nothing of the constant presence of a cavalry guard at the Consulate with a strength of a hundred men with machine-guns, had sufficient influence upon the imagination of the Chinese authorities and compelled them to accept without murmur the "advice" of the Russian Consul.

At the time of the Chinese revolution, when disorders and murders broke out in Kashgaria, the Russian Consul summoned a battalion of infantry and a regiment of Cossacks from Tashkent for the protection of Russian subjects. The Chinese revolutionary authorities in Kashgar called at the Consulate in a body to protest against the introduction of Russian troops into the friendly territory of China. The Consul listened in silence to their lengthy discourse, then stood up, banged the table with his fist, and sharply told them to go to the devil. The members of the deputation hurriedly withdrew. Later on, they collected a huge crowd with soldiers and bands, and went outside the city to meet the arriving Russian troops, gave a formal banquet to the officers, and numerous presents to the lower ranks. This rapid change of attitude at the slightest sign of resolution is characteristic of the Chinese people and diplomats.

In the days when China had a powerful neighbour on the north it never even entered their heads to demand that Europeans should submit to their jurisdiction, or the so-called return of concessions which had never belonged to Chinamen.

The collapse of Imperial Russia and the appearance of the Soviet Government had heavy consequences for the inhabitants of Kashgar. Trade ceased, profits disappeared,

[Photo by C. P. Skrine

CHINESE CEMETERY—TUMULI OVER BODIES OF CHINESE MASSACRED IN REVOLT OF 1861. BOSTAN-TEREK MOUNTAINS IN THE BACKGROUND. VIEW, LOOKING WESTWARD, FROM ROOF OF BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL, KASHGAR

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earnings stopped, the frontier was closed; natives of Kashgar who had stopped in Russian territory lost their property and hundreds of them also their heads, as "exploiters and enemies of the people." Often enough I heard the prayer, "Restore, O Allah, the White Tsar to Russia and all will be well." And that was the song of the Chinese republicans.

To me personally the people of Kashgar were very kind. Whenever I had occasion to buy anything in a shop, they often used to sell me things at a specially cheap rate, and sometimes even refused to take payment altogether. It took quite a lot of persuading on my part to induce the native barber to accept money when he cut my hair and shaved the long beard, which had given me so wild and uncouth an appearance when I arrived in Kashgar.

The Soviet authorities of the Autonomous Socialistic Republic of Turkestan, who had brought their rich and prosperous country to ruin in the space of three years, cast envious eyes on Kashgar, where there was still corn in plenty and cattle and sheep, where boots could be bought and good home-made textiles, even Indian and British goods. Of course, they did not bother their heads much about the starving ragged population, but the grumblings of the Red Army and mass of workers, who were lacking even common necessities, drove them to spare no effort to open up commercial relations with Kashgar, the frontiers of which had been closed by order of the Tao In, the Chinese Governor. The artful Chinaman understood only too well to what danger the opening of the frontier would expose the country by admitting the agents of the world revolution.

The Governor-General of the Province of Sin Kiang, the Du Du, however, held other views. He resided in Urumchi, a long way from Kashgar. Some mysterious bargain with the Bolsheviks induced him to look with favouring eye upon the opening of the frontier and resumption of

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commerce with the Soviet authorities. By order of the Du Du, the Tao In proceeded to Irkeshtam, a point on the frontier, to negotiate details there with the delegates of the Soviet.

The astute Tao In took with him a whole band of respectable citizens of Kashgar, consisting largely of tradesmen whose property had been "nationalized" by the Soviets, or men whose relatives had been murdered by the Bolsheviks in Russian Turkestan.

The Soviet delegates, of whom three-quarters were Jews, painting in their mind's eye rosy pictures of a very profitable piece of business, and a return home with an enormous caravan with all sorts of merchandise, eagerly pressed to know how soon and under what conditions trade would be resumed.

"Before we talk about that," replied the Tao In formally, "I should explain to you that the form of government here in China is republican, and consequently all important questions are settled by elected representatives of the people. I, myself, have no authority whatever, and, according to our constitution, I am merely presiding at this conference, where all questions are decided by a majority of votes. Refer your questions to these gentlemen," he continued, pointing out his attendant supers who, well rehearsed and dressed in most elegant *halats*, were standing respectfully on one side awaiting instructions. These unanimously declared that they were ready to resume commercial relations immediately with the Soviet Republic, but first of all, it was necessary to settle outstanding accounts, and to pay in full all claims for damage done to citizens of Kashgar, and all loss of property and goods, together with full compensation to the families of Chinese citizens killed by the Bolsheviks. Only on completion of these payments in full in gold or Chinese silver currency would they discuss the resumption of commercial relations.

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The Bolsheviks were crestfallen. All their bright hopes of taking home the big stocks of goods awaited there so impatiently came crashing to the ground.

"Listen to them." said the Tao In, "Listen to the voices of our representatives of the people; you know ours is a democratic country and I can do nothing against the popular will."

The representatives of the "freest country in the world" could not dispute these convincing arguments, based as they were upon sound Marxian principles.

After some discussion among themselves, the Soviet delegates requested the Tao In to provide them and the starving garrison of Irkeshtam with food and fodder.

"With pleasure, of course; I will be happy to do this," answered the Tao In reassuringly. "Please let me have a full schedule of your requirements."

The delighted Bolsheviks quickly drew up a long list of provisions and forage, not forgetting to include boots and warm clothing for the tattered garrison.

"And when may we count on getting these things?" they asked, dying of impatience to have a good feed and some warm clothing for themselves and their comrades.

"I cannot very well tell you exactly," replied the Chinaman quietly, "but there will be no delay directly I get the permission of the central Government. I will send in your petition by special courier to Pekin to-morrow."

That meant that the delegates and Red garrison might expect to get the food and clothing they needed so badly in seven or eight months, provided the Pekin Government agreed!

There was nothing left for the Bolsheviks to do but to return home as quickly as possible and evacuate the fort at Irkeshtam, leaving only a guard. The Tao In afterwards told me with much amusement how angry the delegates

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were at the result of their negotiations. He told me that he asked them whether they knew the engineer Nazároff who had come to live in Kashgar and why he had left Tashkent.

"We do not know," answered the delegates in some confusion. "We tried to persuade him not to go away, but he would not listen to us and left; we placed no obstacles in his way."

During that winter there took place a rising against the Bolsheviks in Semirechie. It was crushed with the customary ruthless cruelty, and the rebels scattered or killed. A party of refugees consisting of seventy-eight well-armed men, with women and children, entered Chinese territory and petitioned the Tao In to admit them into Kashgar. Had they but known the Chinese character a little better, of course, they would simply have come in without any permission at all and stopped there. Unfortunately, still retaining some belief in international law and the civilization of the Chinese authorities, when the Chinese frontier guard, consisting of ten Kirghiz, called upon them to lay down their arms while waiting for permission, they quietly did so.

Permission to enter Kashgar was refused on the grounds that China was a neutral country and, therefore, unable to favour either of the parties contending for power in Russia. The Tao In, however, sent them some food and fodder for their horses. Then the whole party was sent to the district of Ak Su, as though with the object of settling them there. Then, by the orders of the Tao In of Ak Su, they were conducted very artfully and without noticing it, back to Russian territory, where a party of Bolsheviks, who were waiting for them, promptly exterminated the whole party of unarmed men, women, and children. The Tao In of Kashgar, a gifted and highly cultivated Chinaman, said that the Bolsheviks were human only in external appearance, but within had the hearts of wild beasts.

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With Sarts and Chinese

For the European it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the workings of a Chinaman's heart and mind. One often hears the expression that Chinamen have no nerves. This is really true. They are capable of the greatest cruelties, and of the invention of the most fiendish tortures, at which they can look on quite unconcernedly. A well-known Chinese official, an acquaintance of mine, who had had an excellent education in Russia, cold-bloodedly punished his cook, a Sart, for some small offence, by giving him fifteen hundred strokes. He told me with a laugh that after the flogging the man's culinary skill improved immensely. Yet he was not a bad-tempered man, in fact a very nice fellow.

The Chinese are very fond of animals, both wild and domestic; they treat them well, look after them and do not grudge money on feeding them. In this respect they are a great contrast to the Sarts, who look upon money spent on feeding beasts almost as good as wasted. Horses and mules belonging to the Chinese always have a well-fed look, but the poor brutes that belong to the Sarts always have sunken flanks and protruding ribs.

The Chinese train their driving-horses to steer not by the reins, but by word of command. Orders to the right, left, stop, go on, back, steady, faster, and so on, are conveyed by strange monosyllabic sounds of the Chinese special language for horses. In their *mapas* and carts horses are often harnessed in tandem, with the leader connected up with only one rein, which is quite useless for guiding; yet they drive round all the bends and corners, making complicated manoeuvres at the trot, through the narrow streets of the towns, crowded with people, entirely by word of command. The driver only carries a couple of whips, a long and a short one. The Tungans, that is, Chinese Moslems who live in Semirechie, manage to drive even *troikas* in this way, to the astonishment of the Russian peasants.

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Moved On!

Chinese merchants are famous for their honesty and integrity in financial transactions. With the Sart population, however, it is just the opposite. Theft, with them, is the commonest thing in the world. They steal from each other quite shamelessly, breaking in at night through the thin walls of their jerry-built houses and shops. The wife of a Tartar who had moved here from Tashkent used to complain bitterly of her acquaintances even among the well-to-do commercial class. When they came to see her they used to take home with them, hidden away in their cloaks, all sorts of domestic utensils, spoons, and so on, but most of all plates and dishes. Valuables and jewelry, of course, are carefully hidden away and locked up securely when guests are invited. If a theft were noticed in time by the hostess the guests would be all searched unceremoniously, and if the missing article were found the guilty party would laugh and the incident would be treated as a huge joke.

Punishment for theft is very cruel in China. The thief is flogged and, at least in the part of China where I was, obliged to wear the *kang*, a large and heavy board with a hole in it for the head, which is thus isolated from the body, so that the unfortunate man cannot reach his mouth with his hands. Day and night the poor wretch sits with the thing round his neck, unable to eat or drink without help, or drive away the clouds of flies that buzz round to torment him. The Ti Tai, or commander-in-chief of the troops, had a still sharper way with thieves. He used to cut them up and hang the pieces on the city gates, with an inscription in Chinese and Sart warning all against the fate for thieves. These cruel measures, however, had little or no result in suppressing theft, which used to occur even in the Ti Tai's own house.

In the only laundry in Kashgar, run by a Sart named Abdu Kadyr who worked for all the European colony in

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Kashgar, there were three burglaries. The first time he shot the thief with a sporting gun, for which he received a cash reward of twenty *sar*, that is about three pounds, from the local commissary of police. The second time the thief was only wounded, but when the Russian doctor had cured his wounds he got five hundred strokes and was chained for a year to a post. The third time a thief found his way in by the window early in the morning, and made away with all the linen ready for delivery and lots of other movable things under the very eyes of Abdu Kadyr and his wife. The next day the thief confessed under torture; he got two thousand strokes and was put in prison, where they found on his body scars of a previous flogging. Such confirmed thieves are recruited from the dregs of the population, *kumarbazi*, gamblers who have lost everything, Sart and Chinese mercenaries, and so on.

Another great failing of the Sarts is their abstinence from personal cleanliness. Neglecting the injunctions of the Shariat on ablutions, or fulfilling them in a purely perfunctory manner with sand or dust, the natives of Kashgar seldom wash. The only people whom I know that are worse in this respect are the Tibetans. An educated Moslem who had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca told me that the dirtiest of all the pilgrims were the natives of Kashgar, while the cleanest were those from Java. I once found the Russian doctor engaged in removing maggots from the ear of a quite nice-looking young woman who was suffering from this peculiar form of ear-trouble. The doctor told me that such cases were common in summer. This woman was comparatively educated and of good family; she was sister of the laundry proprietor mentioned above, and another brother of hers was a servant in a Russian house, so the whole family were familiar with European ideas. It is not surprising, therefore, that the natives of

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Kashgar suffer terribly from skin diseases and are all verminous.

In general education and culture the natives of Kashgar are far below their cousins of Ferghaná, the folk of Andijan, as they call them. Their strange way of speaking, the accentuation, the swallowing of the terminations of the words, their pronunciation, the preservation of archaic forms of the Djagatai tongue, all betray the Kashgar man at once among the better educated Sarts of Russian Turkestan. Their simplicity, ignorance, and boorish manners make them the butt of all the wags in the bazaars of Ferghaná and Tashkent. Of themselves, however, they have a very high opinion. Even the very beggars, who are, of course, totally ignorant and illiterate, simple *mardakiori* and general labourers insist on putting the honourable title *akhum* after their names, that is, Reader of the Koran, so that we find Omar Akhum, Ibrahim Akhum, and so on.

One tolerably educated Sart of Kashgar, who had worked out a simple method of distilling a very good and pure spirit from *kishmish* or dried sultanas, quite seriously assured me that gunpowder was invented by the philosopher Aflatun, by whom they mean Plato, whom they regard with great respect as a True Believer as good as a Mahommedan. "You know, they study his book in the *medressé* at Bukhara," he added as final proof.

Rather strangely, the natives of Kashgar do not turn their thoughts so much to Bukhara. Their sympathies and spiritual glances are directed rather to Turkey, which they consider the very ideal of a Moslem country, of honour, learning, and military power, blissfully ignorant of the reforms of the Ghazi, or else declining to believe what they hear about them.

The physical type of the settled urban population in this eastern part of Turkestan approaches to the Aryan rather

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than to the Turanian. One sees brown-haired men, and even dark blonds with big round eyes and regular noses.

Although the Chinese have governed the country with a few interruptions almost from the first centuries of the Christian era, their influence is scarcely visible in the physical type of the population. In the Middle Ages all this region was known as Uiguria and the Uigur type was then, as now, undoubtedly a blend of the Aryan with the Turanian or Turco-Tartar, and all through the stormy history of the Uigur people their blood has been mingled with that of the Turki and true Mongols. The nucleus of the population is clearly of Aryan origin, from Persia.

The Tadjiks who inhabit the valleys of the Pamirs, Sariköl, and Badakhshan are the link between the old Uigurs and the Persians. Among the Tadjiks in the Pamirs there are members of the Ishmaelites, devotees of the "Old Man of the Mountains," the "Assassins" of the Crusaders, once the terror of Persia, Syria, and even Egypt, whence they have long since totally disappeared. The Tadjiks of the Pamirs to-day are a quiet, peaceful folk, who acknowledge, strange to say, as their head that sportsman, statesman, and millionaire, the Aga Khan, who is the direct descendant of the leader of those Ishmaelites who emigrated from Persia into India.

At the dawn of Persian history we find indications of the spread of the Persians and of Persian influence to the region of Kashgar, Khotan, and the basin of Lob Nor. Clearly this movement took place, for the great part, through the Pamirs, the same route that was followed by Marco Polo in the thirteenth century. The northerly route through Semirechie was evidently dangerous in those days owing to the presence of the nomad Turks, that is, the Scythians, Sacal, or Kirghiz. In Kashgar at the present day the influence of the Persian blood is seen in the good looks of

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the women, their small, plump figures, and big, round, dark-brown eyes.

The Turanian tribes known as Hun Ui were known to the Chinese as far back as the days of the mythical Ho, twenty-three centuries before Christ. Later the name was altered to Han Yung and finally, during the Tsin Dynasty, to Hunnu. They played a big part in history. At one time the Huns conquered China, Eastern and Western Turkestan, Bukhara, and Turkmenia. At the end of the first century of our era they moved westwards and easily took the extensive Caspian area. This was a critical moment in the history of Asia and of Europe, the beginning of the advance of the barbarian hordes into mediaeval Europe. To the present day there are descendants of the Huns in Europe, the Kalmucks or Djungari, mongolized Turks, whose favourite dainty is a piece of tender meat cooked under the saddle on a horse's back, where it gets impregnated with the animal's perspiration and "done to a turn." European historians describe the aversion felt by Western Europeans from this method of cooking a steak, which was the rule in the armies of Attila. It is the prototype of *Bifteck à la Tartare* of London restaurants.

It must not be thought, however, that the dusty plain of Kashgaria has always been the scene of savagery, cruelty, and bloodshed. Its distant past is full of poetry, art, and a lofty culture, the meeting-place of the civilizations of India, China, Persia, and Greece, where the deserts of to-day were once full of life, flourishing towns, and luxuriant gardens. Unhappily, this mighty past is all buried in the mystic shroud of the fog of history.

There are no written annals nor historical data for the assessment of the ancient history of this interesting land. Just as the geologist forms a picture of the past history of a region by the remains of organisms long since disappeared,

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and by the deposits which contain them, so here must the historian re-establish the past by the fossil remains of civilization preserved in the deserts, by fragments of ancient manuscripts in forgotten dialects, by old tradition and folk songs.

About ten miles from Kashgar, in a desert valley of Artush, at the spring called Uch Mirvan, the Three Windows, we find traces of an unfamiliar past very different from the life of to-day. Here, right in the middle of a high vertical face of a loess cliff forming the right bank of the river, there are three yawning rectangular openings, windows or doors, leading into the heart of the hill. Unfortunately, the curiosity of the traveller cannot be satisfied, as neither from above nor from below is there access to these mysterious openings. From beneath there are visible remains of a steep stairway that once led to them. Either time or man has destroyed the access to this entry into the bowels of the mountain. It is useless to ask the local folk about it. Most would reply that they do not know, but one or two might say that it is the abode of djinns, while others might say that it is But Khané, the Temple of Idols, but the best-informed will relate an impossible legend. Only when the sun is nearing the horizon and its rays strike directly into these windows can one get a glimpse of the interior. Perhaps it was thus designed by the unknown architect for this very purpose. You may then just see that the walls are adorned with frescoes recalling Byzantine icons. Centuries have passed since the old Uigurs worshipped here, who were equally tolerant of all the faiths of the ancient world. Their modern descendants of Kashgar have no memory of their own past. They have no history. Islam, crystallizing their understanding, has made them lethargic. They have only the petty interests of a dwarfed mentality. Yet let us not condemn him, the Uigur-Sart of to-day, for at least he has

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not touched nor destroyed the monuments of a remote antiquity, for which an ignorant curiosity is more dangerous than an indolent indifference.

Some interesting and splendidly preserved frescoes in the town of Kucha, among the ruins where some old Sanskrit manuscripts were discovered, have been deliberately spoilt by the natives and blackened with the smoke of fires lit there for the purpose. The reason is this. Under the influence of European scientific explorers, Chinese officials developed an interest in the curiosities of antiquity and began to visit the ruins to see on the spot the product of ancient art. According to Chinese etiquette, officials travel with a numerous following and convoy, so these parties of important tourists were accompanied by a mass of servants, soldiers, grooms, horses, mules, and so on. The upkeep of all this crowd, according to Chinese custom, fell upon the population. Further, the *beks*, or petty local authorities, never let go an opportunity of making a special impost on the population, for the purpose of entertaining such important guests. Driven to despair by such ruinous expeditions the natives decided to wipe out the cause of their troubles at its source and set to work to destroy the precious remains of ancient art.

There are ruins of ancient towns in the district of Maral Bashi, in the sandy desert of Takla Makan, and near the town of Turfan, where many Uigur manuscripts were found dating from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries A.D.; and at Lob Nor, where many Chinese manuscripts were discovered. But the most interesting ruins of all are those of Khotan, where were discovered whole libraries in several languages, as Kharoshthi, Brahmi, Tibetan, Chinese, and Hebrew, the latter coming from the Jews of Persia. It is interesting that some of the old manuscripts discovered by Sir Aurel Stein, dating from the second century of the

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Christian era, were written on paper, interesting evidence of the antiquity of the invention of a material so indispensable to our modern civilization. To the present day Khotan is famous for the strong, first-class paper made by the natives from mulberry bark.

On the site of the old city of Khotan, where now stands the village of Totkan, the natives find sandal wood buried under a thick layer of sand, and still use it for dying leather and, what is even more remarkable, they still find cases of tea so well preserved that they can drink it! This is striking evidence of the preservative power of hot, dry sand. There remain, however, little of the houses and other buildings of the ancient town. In the same neighbourhood, at a depth of twenty feet a strange deposit of gold was recently discovered when they were digging a canal. The natives have started washing this gold, which is of peculiar character, occurring in very thin flakes. The riddle of this peculiar auriferous deposit is given in the book written by an old Chinese traveller, Fa Hien, who passed through this region four centuries after Christ, on his way from China to India. He tells of the rich, flourishing city which then stood on this spot, with a big population, and many Buddhist temples glistening with their gilded domes against the cloudless sky. The town disappeared; the temples were ruined and their thickly gilded roofs collapsed and were buried under the sand. The copper was oxidized and disappeared, dissolved by the percolation of water or scattered by the wind, but the thin flakes of gold remained and now, a millenium and a half later, the impoverished and ignorant descendants of this cultivated and highly civilized people strive to recover these fragments of their country's ancient glory.

Readers who wish to form an idea of the great historical past of this interesting region must refer to the works of

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Moved On!

Sir Aurel Stein, who has resurrected for Europe this unknown, forgotten civilization and its works of art. His splendid work, *Serindia*, gives magnificent illustrations of the frescoes, clothing, utensils, precious objects, and so on, while his more recent work, *On Ancient Central Asian Tracks*,* describes in somewhat more popular form his great work of exploration in Central Asia, conjuring up some of the details of official and military life of the beginnings of the Chinese Empire, and illustrating the influence of western classicism upon oriental art. A great collection from northern Kashgaria was taken away by the German archaeologist, Dr. von Le Coq.† In this manner many antiquities and treasures of this land, so remote from us alike in space and time, have been preserved for civilized mankind in the museums of London and Berlin. But much more remains yet in the mysterious deserts of Central Asia, and many products of man's brain and hands still repose in those ancient libraries buried under the sands.

Recently the Governor-General of the province of Sin Kiang, the Du Du, forbade Sir Aurel Stein to continue his archaeological researches in the province within his jurisdiction, so this indefatigable worker, who has revealed such unsuspected treasures to the world, was compelled to leave the land of Altishahr. The order was based on the contention that China ought to investigate her own antiquities. The policy of the Powers during recent years has confirmed the Chinese in the delusion that they are one of the most modern, up-to-date, and advanced nations in the world.

Only a few years ago, when the great Bear of the north was ready at any moment to twist the tail of the Eastern Dragon, Russian explorers paid little attention to the pro-

* Macmillan, 1933.

† *Buried Treasures of Chinese Turkestan*, by Dr. Albert von Le Coq. Translated by Anna Barwell, London, 1927.

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hibitions of the Chinese authorities. General Przewalski, for instance, bluntly told the Chinese officials to go to the devil, while he did just as he pleased. But times have changed, and the boldness and impudence of the Chinese have increased, while the actual power of China has shrunk. The learned world and civilized portion of humanity will suffer severe loss. Who can say what treasures and monuments of ancient literatures may yet be discovered in those wondrous old libraries preserved in the desert sands? Into whose hands may these priceless objects fall? Maybe, some wandering nomad of the desert may light his fire with them to make his tea, or some Chinese official use some page torn from a book written in the first century of Christianity as spills to light his pipe of opium? Christianity penetrated into these recesses of Asia at a very early date, that is, its eastern branch, the Nestorian Church, which flourished here more than a thousand years alongside Manichaeism, Mazdaism, and Buddhism. Kashgar was the seat of a Christian bishop for many centuries. It is not impossible that here may be revealed in these ancient libraries some of those old Christian books, the loss of which makes so great a gap in our Holy Writ. For instance, out of the twelve books of the Acts of the Apostles, only one, the ninth, has come down to us in its entirety, with a fragment of the first. To-day the ancient libraries of the vanished cities of Central Asia are the only spot where there is still hope of finding the most precious manuscripts for the Christian world, as well as the lost writings of the classics.

Many have wondered what could have been the cause of the ruin of these vanished cities, of the disappearance of this once flourishing civilization, of the conversion of a prosperous country into a waterless expanse of sand.

It is customary to attribute the ruin of the cities of Central Asia to the gradual desiccation of this immense depression,

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which was, according to tradition, until comparatively recently the bottom of a great Central Asian sea, the Han Hoi* of the Chinese. And, it is true, the abundance of salt in the soil, of arenaceous deposits, of the *barkhani* or shifting sand dunes, the presence in the centre of the continent of a swampy depression, the mysterious Lob Nor, fed by the Tarim river, which in turn collects the waters of a whole series of streams, the Kashgar Daryá, Yarkand and Khotan Daryás, the Ak su, and so on, all seem to confirm the Chinese tradition of the former existence here of a huge inland sea. One German scientist goes so far as to account for the Flood by the outburst of the sea of Han Hoi through the Tian Shan mountains, which had dammed it back, into the plains of Turkestan, Persia, and Mesopotamia.

Unfortunately, geological evidence completely contradicts these fantasies. The region in question was a desert as far back as the middle of the Tertiary Epoch. There are no marine sediments here since that time, only lacustrine and aeolian deposits characteristic of desert conditions.

The country became dry far back in its geological history, the volume of atmospheric precipitation varying only periodically in dependence on various factors. The region is by no means the great depression which it appears to be on the map. The average altitude of the Tarim basin is about 3,000 feet above the sea, while the valley of Kashgar is 4,500 feet, that is about the height of the Rigi Kulm in Switzerland; it is in fact alpine. The lowest part of the area, the lake of Lob Nor, is 2,000 feet above the sea.

The supposed desiccation of Turkestan within historic times and the consequent destruction of its cities and the

* The term "Han Hoi" has been applied by the Russian geologist, Obruchev, to other deposits having no connection with the desert deposits of the Tarim basin.

[Photo by C. P. Skrine

STRATUM OF ANCIENT REMAINS EXPOSED BY FLOOD IN 1922, YOTKAN (ANCIENT KHOTAN)

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disappearance of its ancient civilization was the object of investigation of the Pumpelly Expedition from America in the beginning of the century. This expedition afforded very valuable physico-geographical and geological results, but, of course, did not reveal any drying up of Turkestan in our epoch. Quite the contrary, everything tends to show that Central Asia enjoys to-day more atmospheric moisture than it did two or three thousand years ago.

Nineteen years ago the late Professor J. W. Gregory, in a scholarly article in the *Geographical Journal* entitled "Is the Earth Drying Up?" discussed the evidence with his usual clarity. He concluded that "Archaeological and historical evidence shows that Central Asia had a very arid climate in the earliest times of which we have human record."

No, it was not the process of Nature which ruined the land, but the act of mankind. It was war. Internecine struggles, raids, forays, and invasion by savage hordes who cut the irrigation canals, brought destruction to the fair cities and ruin to the settled population.

For nowhere else in the world, perhaps, does the close connection and complete dependence of human life and culture upon its water supply so stand out so strikingly and so obviously as in Central Asia. If there is no water for irrigation, we see a lifeless waste, fatal to man and beast alike; bring water from the rivers and mountain streams or find it in wells, and the desolation is at once converted into a flourishing garden. Where there are trees, fields, and buildings, the drift of the wind-blown, shifting dunes is arrested at the boundary and they are rooted to the ground. Cut the canals, and vegetation wilts and dies, the waves of the sandy ocean sweep over and the once-smiling oasis is flooded and all signs of man's activity buried.

Such instances have occurred in Turkestan within the

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memory of living man, of the transformation of a flourishing district into a desert or of a desert into a land of plenty by the destruction or construction of the life-giving *aryks* or irrigation canals.

Not long since there appeared a work entitled *The Storm-Swept Roof of Asia*, by Dr. Emil Trinkler, in which the author states that he "believes the age of the Takla Makan Desert to be less than has been generally supposed and that three thousand years ago the country presented quite a different appearance, being probably wooded and watered."

I find it quite impossible to agree with the learned author's supposition. Three thousand years is a negligible space in geological time. In Central Asia it is historical time. There is not the slightest historical evidence, or even tradition, of the transformation of an immense area in Central Asia from a well-watered and vast forest into an ocean of shifting sands. Remains of plants cultivated by means of artificial irrigation have been found which are two thousand years old, so why are there no traces of those great forests?

Central Asia has been an arid desert country since the middle of the Tertiary Epoch, with no drainage to the sea. On three sides there rise the loftiest of mountain chains, the movement of elevation of which is still continuing, and these completely isolate the region from the abundant atmospheric precipitation which comes from the ocean. It is impossible to imagine that a mere three thousand years ago the orographic, geological, and climatic conditions of Central Asia were totally different and capable of producing such heavy precipitation as would be necessary to water so vast a forest over the area occupied by Takla Makan.

Such a hypothesis demands that the western and southern mountain barriers, representing the most massive mountain systems in the world, should cease to exist. If we look at a

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map of this part of Asia, we see at once that only an insignificant portion of the area is occupied by cultivated oases, dependent for irrigation upon water flowing down from the mountains within the region. In the valleys of the rivers there are only sandy tracts with scrub. Here and there, where the subterranean water is not far below the surface, there is vegetation, but in the Takla Makan the underground water is very deep or totally absent. What vast quantities would be required for the natural irrigation of this boundless sea of shifting sands, and whence could it have come three thousand years ago?

The first act of the invader in Central Asia has always been to cut off the water supply, to destroy the canals, and then the towns and countryside become an easy prey. And if the population be wiped out too, the locality is turned into a desert for ever.

Another problem arises. Who first made his way into the deserts of Central Asia, inspired the breath of life and made a settled, civilized existence possible?

History does not supply us with evidence on this point. We only know that as far back as the twelfth century before Christ there was settled life and artificial irrigation in Khwarizm, to-day Khivá, that the main canals of the oasis of Tashkent bear the names of the Persian satraps of Darius Hystaspes, Salar, Boss, Kaikaus, Zal, etc. The temptation is irresistible to conclude that it was from the ancient Persian monarchy, from Assyria and Babylon, famed for their development of irrigation engineering, that the art of bringing in free-flowing water to arid deserts was introduced.

But in truth, the boot is on the other leg. The natives of Sumer, who laid the foundations of the civilization of Babylon and Assyria, were of the Turki race, evidently immigrants into Mesopotamia from Central Asia. In the

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Transcaspian district, near the town of Askhabad, in the *kurgan* of Anau, the Pumpelly Expedition discovered, at a great depth, beneath several "culture layers," remains of pottery, vessels, and utensils exactly like those of Sumeria. Below them were remains of the Stone Age. The civilization of Sumer, as is well known, is looked upon as the most ancient culture of mankind.

The early history of Central Asia teems with secrets and with riddles. Out of the dim past, from the tradition of poetry and from legends, we may glean information about the past of Kashgar and Khotan. This region, for several centuries before the Christian era, formed part of the extensive empire of Turan, governed by a long list of Scythian emperors, generally referred to as descendants of the great family of Afrasiab. Wealth, military power, law, and civilization were enjoyed by this ancient and remarkable people, who have played so important a part in history under various Turki, Chinese, Indian, and Greek names as Scythians, Yue Chi, Sacae, Sakyá, Goths, though not the European ones, Massagetae, and so on. Their capital was at Samarkand. Not far from that town to the present day there exists a place known by the name of that ancient emperor, Afrasiab, and various antiquities are found there from time to time.

Persian poets and historians tell with horror of the fearful desolation left by the Scythians who invaded the country. It was, in fact, the eternal, hereditary enmity of two cultures, of two peoples, the peasants of Iran and the nomads of Turan, reflected in their mythology. In the seventh century before Christ the Persians succeeded in driving back the Scythians beyond the Oxus, to-day the Amú Daryá, which became for ages the natural frontier between these two hostile peoples.

In the sixth century before Christ we find the first allusions to the district of Kashgar and Khotan in *The Song of*

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Siawush. Throughout this vast area, including Lob Nor, the authority of Turan was supreme.

Siawush was the son of the Persian Emperor Kai Kaus. Quarrelling with his father in the year 580 B.C., he fled the country across the Amú Daryá and sought refuge with the old enemy of his family, Afrasiab, who was then living at Ramistan, between Samarkand and Bukhara, the name of which survives in a village to the present day, famous for its splendid temple of the Fire Worshippers, Atash Kahad. In Persia and in Turania at that period the religion of Zoroaster flourished, while farther to the east it was replaced by Buddhism. The Scythian king received Siawush with honour and every hospitality, and gave him in marriage his own daughter, the beautiful Farangis. As dowry, Afrasiab gave Siawush the province of Khotan. The happy couple went to Kashgar and chose for their residence a place called Kung, probably Katok, the ruins of which are near Lob Nor, about twelve or fourteen days journey from the town of Khotan. Evidently this was a well-populated country in those days, and prosperous. To-day it is a barren, salt desert, where sandstorms rage and only an occasional nomad shows himself on his ship of the desert.

But the happiness of the young couple was short-lived. Envy and cunning, so common in Asia, were the ruin of Siawush. Garshewaz, brother of King Afrasiab, envying the success of Siawush, his growing power, his wealth, and his influence, sowed the seeds of suspicion in the king's ear that Siawush was plotting for independence in order to carve out an empire of his own in the distant portions of Central Asia. Siawush was invited to the court and treacherously put to death. The scene of his murder was for long held sacred by the Magi, as the Zoroastrians of Turkestan were known. Every year pilgrims would come and bring cocks to sacrifice.

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This dastardly murder of the innocent young prince provoked exasperation in Persia, and the Emperor Kai Kaus, full of wrath, sent his favourite general, the renowned Rustam, with an immense army to avenge the murder of his son. Rustam besieged Ramistan for two years without result, even building an entire town opposite the besieged fortress, and finally drove Afrasiab out of the country.

Farangis was left with a son, by name Kai Khosru, who succeeded to the throne of his grandfather Kai Kaus after a life full of adventures and became Emperor of Persia. Long he warred with his grandfather Afrasiab, seeking to avenge the murder of his father. After the usual vicissitudes of military fortune, he succeeded in crushing his enemy, seizing Samarkand and killing Afrasiab.

Such is the saga of Siawush relating the early history of the region of Kashgar.

During the period between the fall of the dynasty of Afrasiab and the invasion of Alexander the Great and the establishment of the Graeco-Bactrian empire, Kashgar was the theatre of perpetual collisions between the native population and the invading hordes of Turki peoples.

China at this period was divided into a number of principalities. But in A.D. 94 the Chinese General, Pan Cha'o, invaded Eastern Turkestan with a large force. After annexing Kashgaria to China, he advanced into Western Turkestan, into the land of the Yue Chi, in which name we may recognize the Kirghiz of to-day, from *yue* or *ui*, the *yurtá* or felt tent, and *chi*, tent-dweller, nomad. Pan Cha'o extended his sway as far as the banks of the Caspian. In 102 this Chinese Napoleon allowed his military ambition even to send an expedition to conquer the Roman Empire. From that period until the Arab conquest Kashgaria belonged to China. At this period it was known as Kichik Bukhara, i.e. Bukhara the Lesser, in distinction to Great

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Bukhara, where a powerful state was being formed at that time. The capital, Bukhara itself, was built on a marsh formed by the overflow of the river Masaf, to-day the Zarafshan. In this marsh, according to Arrian, Alexander the Great went hunting and with his own hands killed a "lion," more likely a tiger, as these animals have inhabited these swamps until modern times. The last tiger was killed in the marshes near Bukhara in 1894.

In connection with sport, we may mention here that the great game of polo took its origin and development, according to tradition, in this very land in the days of Afrasiab. Strange to say, nowadays polo is quite unknown in both Eastern and Western Turkestan.

Besides Bukhara, there was another important town in the state, Bekand, the Paikent* of later days, a commercial centre conducting a vigorous trade with Kashgar and China on the east and Persia and Roman Empire on the west. This commerce enriched the cities of Eastern Turkestan and prepared them for the reception of Greek and Roman culture and civilization, which had begun in Graeco-Bactrian times. Bactria, the modern Badakshan, controlled the shortest trade route with Khotan through the Pamirs. On the other hand, Indian influence found its way not only through Bactria, but by the direct route through the Himalayas and Karakoram, the Sogdian pass of antiquity, Sodji-la of the Tibetans. The Chinese, according to their custom, did not interfere in the domestic affairs of the population, contenting themselves with fleecing them. They governed the country through the local *beks*, collected taxes, customs, and other duties, and did all this with the most complete religious toleration. Here flourished not only

* Bai Kent means the Town of Merchants, corrupted later to Paikent. "Kent," sometimes pronounced *kand*, means town; cf. Tashkent, Samarkand, etc.

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Buddhism, but Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Nestorian Christianity.

The time of the Arab invasion of Turkestan, the advance of the Sword of Islam, forms an epoch full of romance and tragedy. Under the command of the great leader Kuteiba, the Arabs crossed the Djeikhun and took the city of Paikent, where they found an immense booty of gold and silver and precious stones. Among these were two emeralds as big as pigeon's eggs, part of the ornaments of an idol. At the time of the sacking of Paikent many of the inhabitants were absent on business in Kashgar. When they returned to find their homes in the hands of the enemy and their families prisoners, they had sufficient wealth to redeem them and rebuild their city, striking evidence of the intensity of the trade with Kashgar.

When the Arabs laid siege to Bukhara, the throne was occupied by the widow of Bukhara-Khidat, by name Khitun, famous throughout Central Asia for her beauty, wisdom, learning, wealth, and, so history relates, love affairs. This Asiatic Cleopatra succeeded in buying off the Arabs and saving her city from capture, paying the Arab general a million *dirhems*. This was in A.D. 675. The Arabs retired beyond the Djeikhun, that is, the Amú Daryá.

But the movement of the Arabs continued. Samarkand was taken, whose culture, wealth, and magnificence is well described by the Arab historians. Also Ferghaná. Thence Kuteiba advanced with his army through the pass of Terek Davan to Kashgar, and arrived almost unopposed at the gates of Turfan. Here he received news of the death of the Emir Valid and returned to Khorasan. Arab influence is less visible in Kashgar than in Western Turkestan. The most important of the dignitaries of Turkestan who was converted to Islam was Saman, a Zoroastrian. His grandchildren became governors of the four provinces of Herat,

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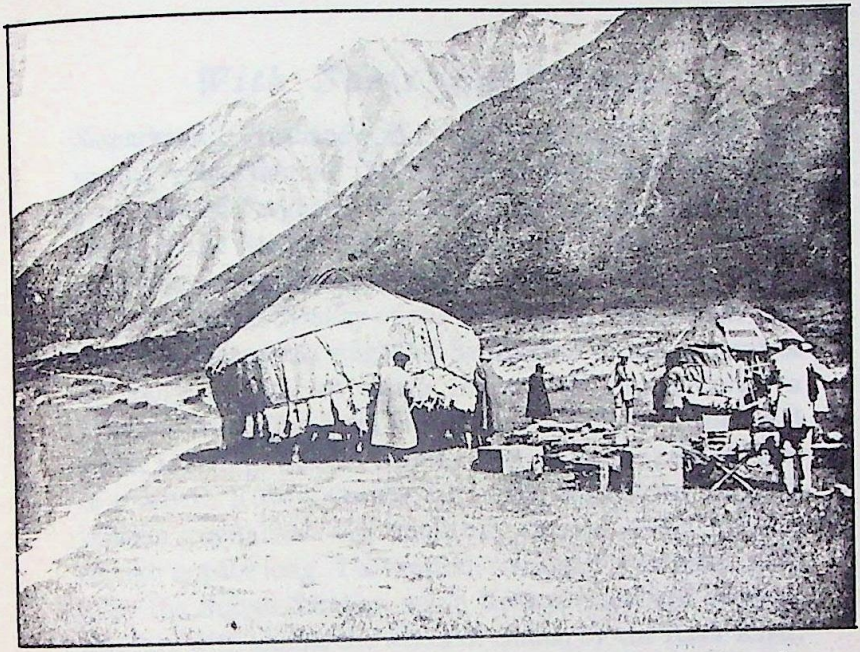
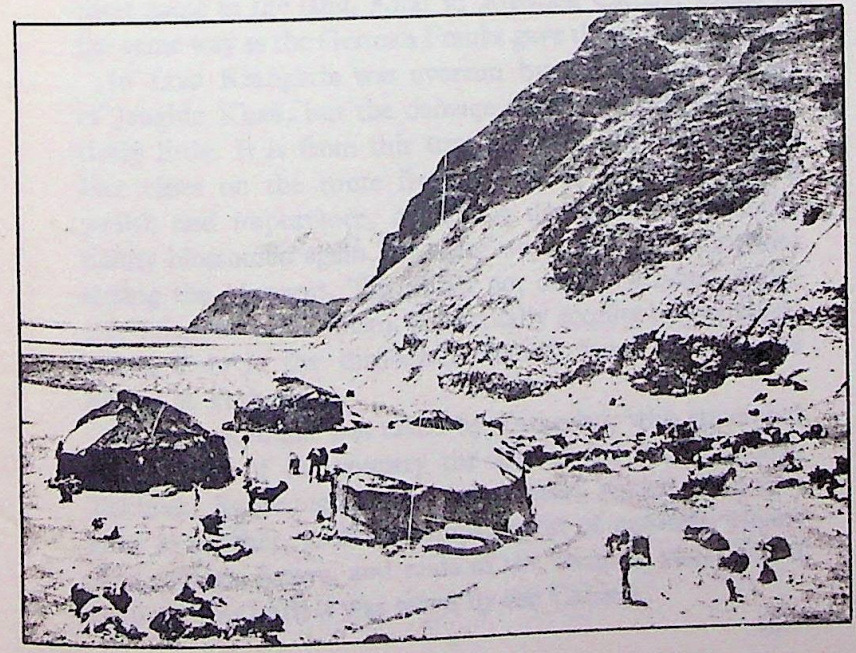


MOVING A KIRGHIZ *ak-oi* OR *yurtá* BODILY



KIRGHIZ ENCAMPMENT

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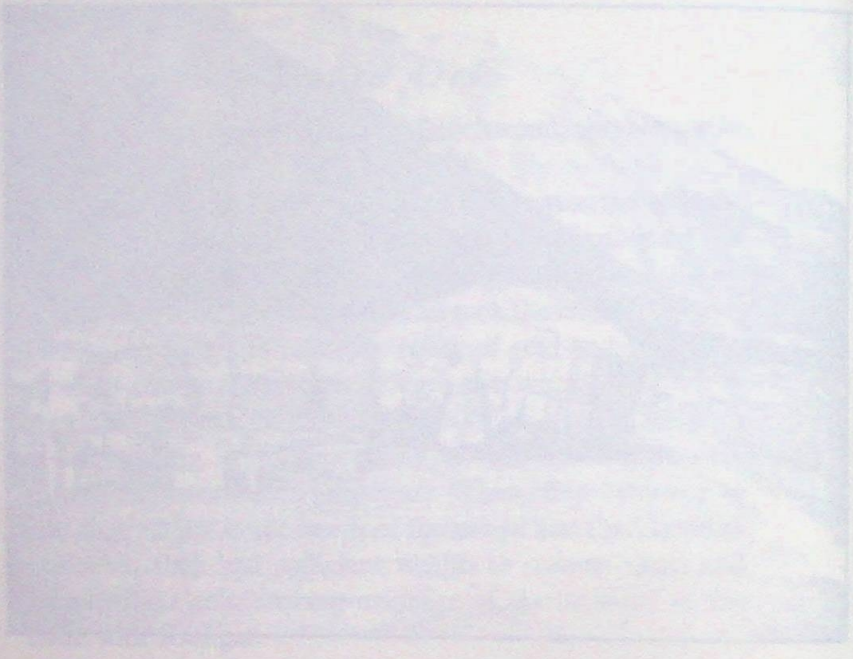

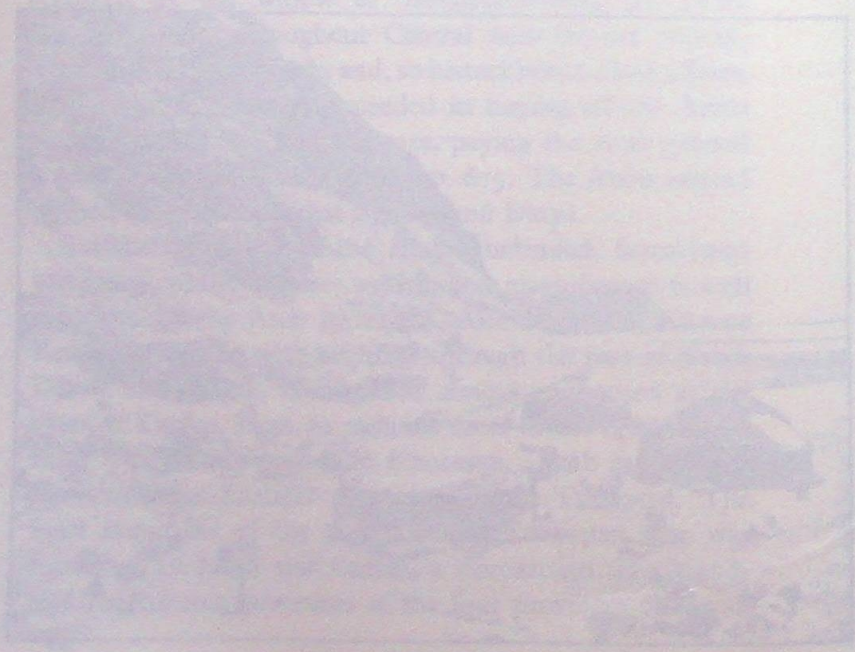

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Samarkand, Ferghaná, and Tashkent, and enjoyed the special protection of the Khalifa himself. One of them, Governor of Ferghaná, by name Nazar, at the time of the rising of the Seistan princes against the Khalifa, succeeded in seizing the government of Bukhara and Turkestan, where he founded the dynasty of the Samanidae. His brother and successor raised the might of Samarkand to the summit of its glory and at his death in 907 left his successor a kingdom extending from Ispahan and Shiraz to Turfan and Gobi, and from Seistan and the Persian Gulf to the steppes of southern Russia. On the fall of the Samanidae, Kashgar became capital of this immense Central Asian empire, though not for long. The western territories were taken from it by the Sultan Sandjar, while Kashgar itself was overrun, together with almost the whole of China, by the Kara Kitai, a people related to the Tungus. Strangely enough, they gave their name to the land, Kitai in Russian, Cathay, much in the same way as the German Franks gave their name to Gaul.

In 1220 Kashgaria was overrun by the Mongol hordes of Jenghiz Khan, but the damage done was probably relatively little. It is from this time that her prosperity dates. Her cities on the route from China to Europe acquired wealth and importance, commerce developed, and Christianity blossomed again, for there were plenty of Christians among the Mongols. The Cross not only flourished alongside Islam and Buddhism, but actually acquired dominance. Marco Polo in the thirteenth century found a Christian bishop at Yarkand.

In 1389 Kashgar was taken by Tamerlan, who appointed as governor of the country the son of the native prince, Tokhluk. Subsequently the government passed from one khan to another, to the accompaniment of quarrels, bloodshed, pillage, forays, and raids of the nomads, and the land knew no rest until it was taken by the Chinese.

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Moved On!

In the beginning of the seventeenth century, amid the rising against the Chinese and internecine squabbles of the natives, the power was seized by a native of Kashgar, Hodja Khidayatulla, who afterwards was surnamed Hodja Apak with the dignity of sanctity. This was, so to speak, the nationalist ruler of Kashgaria, and Hodja Apak afterwards became the national saint of Kashgaria. The mosque dedicated to him, where he is buried, is rather a fine building, situated in the middle of an extensive cemetery, the centre of an annual pilgrimage of thousands of devotees. Unfortunately neither the statesmanship nor the private life of Hazret Apak justifies the respect paid to his memory. He soon handed over the dominion of the country to the governor of the province of Ili, that is Kulja, a foreigner, and according to his contemporaries, he amused himself with half-wits and fleeced the people to clothe his concubines and dancing boys with silk.

After the death of Hazret Apak, the country was a prey to anarchy for a whole century, until peace was restored by the renewed conquest by the Chinese, who behaved with their usual artfulness. They encouraged dissensions between rivals for power, religious parties and rulers of different provinces. Sometimes they deliberately appointed governors from among the beaten in order to excite the hatred of the people against them, and then, when their enemy was sufficiently weakened by internal dissension and intrigue, and so could put up no effective resistance, they had recourse to arms.

On the other hand, the people of Kashgar and of Eastern Turkestan in general, the ancient Uiguria, were never distinguished for their patriotism, unity, or civic courage, or recognition of the common interests of the whole country.

Craft, treachery, envy, rivalry, self-seeking egoism, and

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meanness of the people were fatal obstacles to the freedom of Kashgaria as a state, in spite of the geographical conditions being so favourable to the existence of an independent political entity.

Still, in the course of the nineteenth century there were no less than four risings against the Chinese under the leadership of their various hodjas, who always found refuge in Andijan, near by. The hodjas organized the insurgents and then attacked Kashgar, Yarkand, Khotan, killed or expelled the Chinese officials and seized the highest posts in the country. The people received their deliverers from the Chinese yoke with joy, seeing in the hodjas their own folk and True Believers, their own "national government." But it only required a few weeks and the "liberated" people began to remember wistfully the Chinese authorities and Chinese administration, under which they had enjoyed the blessings of peace and quiet and free commerce, all of which had become impossible under the grasping and violent hands of their own "liberators." Having seized the power, the hodjas set to work to rob the population systematically, behaving as though in a conquered country. Execution, torture, cruelty of every kind to all who disobeyed their orders became even worse under governors of their own race than under the Chinese. The last rising, under the Hodja Wali Khan in 1856, was distinguished by its extreme cruelty. The lamented traveller, Adolf Schlagintweit, who had the misfortune to arrive in Kashgar at this time, as I have already mentioned, was cruelly done to death.

In the early sixties of the last century a rising broke out among the Tungans in Central China, anticipating recent events. These are Chinese Mahommedans, and the influence of their rebellion spread rapidly throughout Eastern Turkestan. At that time a small Russian force of only fifteen hundred men under General Chernaeff was operating

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in Western Turkestan. Tashkent, then a part of the khanate of Kokand (Ferghaná), was defended by General Khudoyar Khan Alimkul, who sent his friend Hodja Buzurg Khan to Kashgar to help his co-religionists. The hodja at that time held the post of Kush-begi, that is, Commissary of Police, at Pskent, forty kilometres from Tashkent. He took with him a prominent soldier, Yakub Bek, who in his youth had been a *batcha* or dancing-boy, a sort of he-geisha, in a *chai-khané* or tea-room. The strength of the whole force that thus invaded Kashgaria consisted of sixty-six men, but they were quickly joined by refugees from Ferghaná and discontented natives of Kashgar. The city surrended without opposition. This was in 1865, one year after General Chernaeff had taken Tashkent. They then besieged Yangi Shahr, the seat of the *amban* or Chinese governor, but this was not such an easy matter. The fortress was taken only thanks to the treachery of Ho Dalai, who commanded the garrison. He had entered into secret correspondence with Yakub Bek and offered to surrender the fortress and accept Islam, if they would give him safe conduct for himself, his family and retainers, and guarantee their safety and property. Directly he had made his bargain with Yakub Bek, Ho Dalai sent the news to the *amban*. The latter, shocked at the treason of his subordinate, blew up his fortress and perished in the ruins with his entire family. The followers of Ho Dalai with their families, together with three hundred Chinese and Tungans soldiers forming the personal retinue of Yakub Bek, enjoyed freedom and protection, but the rest of the city was handed over to the soldiers for looting for seven days. On the site of the old fortress of the *amban*, Yakub Bek built himself an *urda* or citadel, and married the daughter of Ho Dalai. The commander-in-chief of the expedition, the Hodja Buzurg Khan, overcome by these rapid and brilliant successes, abandoned himself to the delights of

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dissipation and debauchery, and shut himself up in his harem. Of course, he was easily deposed by Yakub Bek, who flung him in prison, and afterwards sent him back to his home, a rare instance of clemency according to Asiatic standards.

Yakub Bek quickly became undisputed master of all Eastern Turkestan from the Gobi to the Tian Shan. He assumed the title of Emir Muhammed Yakub Khan, Emir-ul-Musulmanin, Chief of the True Believers. He was also called Ataluik, that is, Defender of the Faith. He recognized the Sultan of Turkey as his Spiritual Protector and in his name issued decrees and coined money.

The appearance of a new and powerful Mahommedan state in Central Asia excited immediate attention in London and St. Petersburg, and embassies were at once despatched from both sides.

The British exaggered the significance of Yakub Bek. They treated him as the powerful ruler of an extensive country, a sort of contemporary or potential Tamerlan, but in the eyes of the Russians he was only a Sart adventurer. At that time the Russians treated the Khans of Kokand and Khiva and the Emir of Bukhara just as contemptuously.

For a Russian it is positively amusing to read with what deep respect the members of the Forsyth embassy prepared for the audience with "His Highness," the son and successor of Yakub, Bek Kuli Bek, with what ceremony they approached this youthful and cruel despot. By his ruthlessness, his inhuman cruelties and atrocities, this cub of a Sart, son of an upstart mountebank and former dancing-boy, who had begun life as the sport of all visitors to his tea-rooms, surpassed even his own father. He was then twenty-six years of age and enjoyed the reputation of being a soldier. The provinces of Urumchi and Manas, which his father had entrusted him to subdue, he had converted into

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a desert. They called his younger brother Khan Kuli Bek; their mother had been a Kirghiz from the Kipchak clan.

The cruelties and ruinous administration of Yakub Khan gradually provoked the population of Kashgar against him, their "liberator," and the Chinese made deft use of his growing unpopularity, while their armies were gradually making their way against him from the Gobi side. When they re-took towns and provinces, they restored order and justice, revoked all oppressive measures and taxes imposed by Yakub Khan's official, treated the people well, set free prisoners of war sent against them by Yakub. The result of this artful policy was that the population received the Chinese on every side with open arms, and the troops of Yakub Khan were glad enough to surrender to them.

The fortune of war betrayed Yakub. In despair at being unable to offer any further serious resistance to the Chinese advance, he, too, finished his own life by taking poison. This was in 1876. The story goes that he placed his fate in the hands of destiny. He ordered two identical cups of coffee to be brought and placed a deadly poison in one of them. He then changed the cups about two or three times, went into another room for a short time, returned, picked up the nearest cup and drank it.

After his death his two sons started fighting desperately for the throne, and there was plenty of bloodshed and treachery on both sides. At length, perceiving the imminence of the common danger to both from the Chinese side, Bek Kuli Bek proposed reconciliation. The brothers met at the appointed time and place, each with his armed retinue. Riding ahead, they dismounted, approached, and extended their hands to shake in token of friendship and oblivion of past enmity. They embraced . . . and at that very moment Bek Kuli Bek drew his revolver and shot his own brother

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dead on the spot. Thus the story of Cain and Abel was repeated in the valley of Kashgar.

When I was a young man I often used to see, in my father's cotton mill in Tashkent, a Sart with a long black beard, clearly dyed, although he was not a really old man. He was a *dekhan* or *chistach*, that is, a landowner and cotton merchant, from Pskent. He used to bring his cotton to our mill to be treated, and sometimes I used to sign the order against which he used to draw from the bank a loan on the security of his cotton. In this modest and silent Sart, whose name was Bek Kuli Bek, no one would have recognized His Highness the Heir to the Throne of Kashgar who, in his day, did not recoil from any brutality, from the pillage and ravaging of an entire province and the treacherous, cold-blooded murder of his own blood-brother.

When, in the 'nineties, there were signs of agitation once more among the Mussulmen of Kashgar, I asked Bek Kuli Bek half jokingly:

"You have heard what is going on in Kashgar. Why don't you try your fortune there again?"

"*Taxir*," replied the former ruler of Kashgar, modestly lowering his eyes, "My time has passed. . . ."

Sic transit gloria mundi!

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CHAPTER III

Bazaar life—Chinese justice—Atrocities of General Ma—His follies and violent end—Cruelties of the Du Du—Executions at dinner—Excellent laws and terrible punishments—Social life—British Consulate-General—A window into Europe.

As in all cities in Central Asia, the bazaar is not only the market for fruit, vegetables, and provisions, but also the centre of social life. In its numerous and extensive *chai-khané*, or tea-houses, equipped with gigantic samovars, spread with variegated rugs and carpets, in the evening before the hour of ablutions and prayers there gathers the most varied public. Central Asia is a democratic country, without class distinctions or castes. Rich and poor, official *beks* and simple *dekhans* or farmers sit cheek by jowl in the same tea-house; they drink the same tea from the same *pialé*—a cousin-word to our "phial"—eat the same rolls, and inhale the fumes of the same tobacco from the same *chilim* or nargileh. It never enters their heads to be squeamish about putting to their lips the mouthpiece that has been sucked by a hundred others, without the thought of a wipe. Here they freely discuss all the news of the day, the latest measures taken by the Government, activities of the *beks* or police officials, decisions of the judges, commercial intelligence, and political news. Here there is no verbal censor and public opinion is openly expressed, with the result that even highly placed and influential men have to reckon with bazaar gossip, which is not lightly to be despised. Sometime they switch on their own form of broadcasting, for they love the art of the story-teller with his fables and anecdotes, or some wandering dervish or half-witted *duvan* to entertain them.

In the bazaar of Kashgar, by some swift but mysterious

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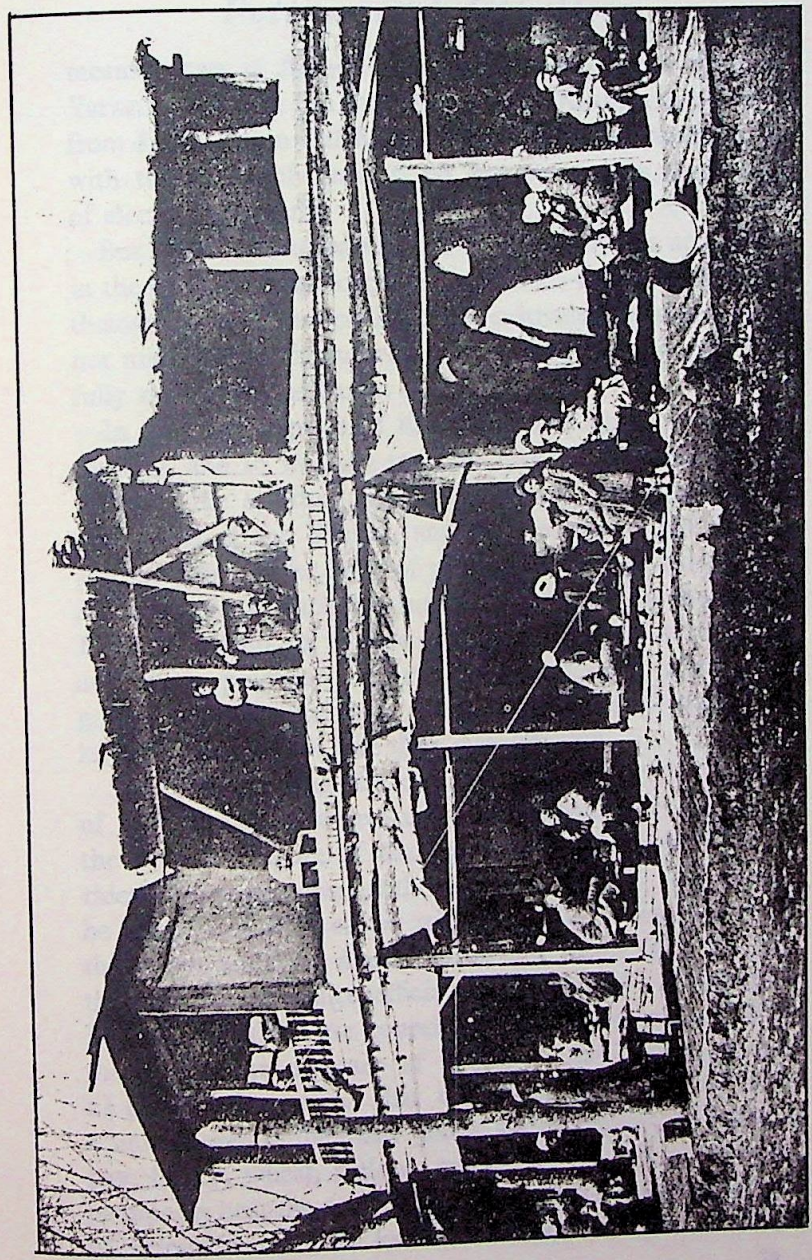

CHAI-KHANÉ. TEA-HOUSE

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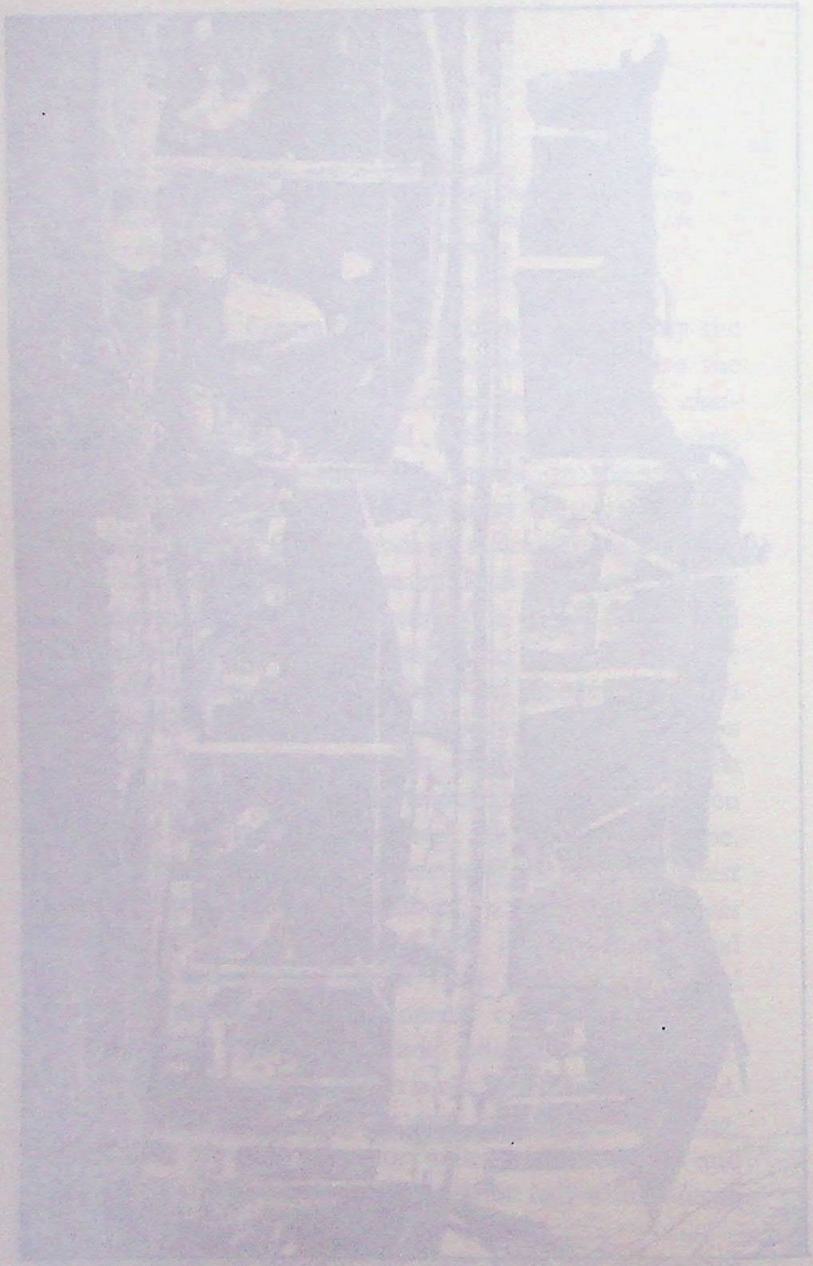

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means, news is flashed through not only from those of Yarkand, Khotan, and the other cities of Kashgaria, but even from distant Pekin and Kabul. The bazaars are connected up with the waves of rumour, no less mysterious than those of electromagnetism.

But you may look in vain for Chinese officials or soldiers in the dense and varied crowds of the tea-houses. Regarding themselves as a more civilized and cultivated people, they do not mingle with the natives, though they keep an ear carefully attuned to the bazaar opinion.

In the market-place of Kashgar is the largest mosque in the city, and so we may say that here in the bazaar is the focus of the spiritual life of the place; here are debated infractions of the Shariat, and such events as the loss of goloshes during the hour of prayer by some absent-minded Moslem, too attentively concentrated upon his devotions. In such a land of thieves this is a common occurrence, and more practical and careful worshippers place their goloshes in front of them when prostrating themselves or kneeling, and do not take their eyes off them.

Sometimes during the day one may meet an inspector of weights and measures upon his rounds. In front rides the respected figure of the *kazi*, the judge, behind whom rides a mounted man with a *kumchá*, a long, thick whip; he is the executive officer who puts into immediate effect the sentence of the *kazi*. Behind him again rides the *bek*, the *parshabs* or police officials, and a crowd of sightseers. For weights they use rounded stones taken straight from the river. The measure of length is the arsheen or *gaz*, $2\frac{1}{3}$ feet. It is curious that the donkey's load is taken as a unit of weight for many goods, such as firewood, lucerne, hay, barley, wheat, melons, grapes, water, and so on. You commonly hear the expression, "I bought a couple of donkeys of melons to-day"; the load of a donkey is about a hundred

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and fifty pounds. Traders found guilty of selling goods below weight or of bad quality get their sentence from the *kazi* then and there, and it is carried out on the spot by the executioner with the whip. In the case of a rich merchant, the *kazi* is glad enough to commute his punishment for a fine, as proceeds go directly into the pocket of this custodian of the Shariat.

One day I saw this procession meet a Sart driving a couple of donkeys laden with black grapes.

"Where are you taking those grapes?" asked the *kazi.*

"I am taking them to a Russian," answered the Sart.

"What does he want such a lot for? Does he trade in them?" asked the *kazi.*

"No, but he makes wine out of them," was the reply of the naïve villager.

"What!" cried the *kazi* in horror, "do you mean to tell me, fool, that you do not know that wine is strictly forbidden by the Shariat? How dare you infringe the command of the Prophet, whose Name be blessed, and take part in work hateful to Allah?"

The offender was duly castigated and his grapes confiscated by the defender of the outraged Shariat.

The next day a *parshab* appeared at the house of the Russian and caught another trespasser against the law of abstention from alcohol, also with a donkey laden with grapes, which were clearly destined for the same infraction of the Koran, but this Sart was more experienced. He gave the policemen eight *tengas*, about one and fourpence, and his sale was passed.

It must not be supposed, however, that Kashgar is distinguished for its sobriety. The Chinese authorities do not forbid the sale or consumption of spirituous liquors, though few Sarts drink and an intoxicated man is a rare sight. Here the place of alcohol is taken by narcotics, opium, and hashish.

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On the main gates of the city, the northern and the southern, where the bazaar streets begin, public notices are suspended by the authorities in two languages, the local dialect of Turki and Chinese, which is understood by very few. In 1921, when the Bolsheviks issued their famous "Amnesty" decree, calling upon all Russian subjects living abroad to register themselves forthwith at the nearest Soviet Consulates under penalty of forfeiture of all civil rights and proclamation as outlaws, the Governor-General of the Province of Sin Kiang instructed the Tao In to notify Russian citizens in Kashgar of their demand. The prefect, not wishing to alarm the numerous Mahommedan element, who had previously been Russian subjects nor disturb the Russian colony, gave orders that the notice be put up only in the official language, that is to say Chinese, so that the decree remained a dead letter. I myself did not hear of it till six months later.

But it is not only innocent notices which may be seen on these massive, iron-bound gates of the city. They are often decorated by very gruesome ornaments. During the four years I lived in Kashgar I saw bundles of men's amputated arms or feet nailed on to the gates, with notices stating whose members they were and why they were cut off. Sometimes the lawful owner of the arms or legs would be chained to the wall with them. The greater part were the "victims of justice" of the bloodthirsty tyrant who dominated Kashgar for many years, General Ma Ti Tai, nominal commander-in-chief of the army, in reality a despot with powers limited only by his own caprice, responsible to no man. The life and activities of this ill-conditioned monster, in the person of an ugly little old Chinaman, have been graphically described in C. P. Skrine's interesting book, *Chinese Central Asia*. The author gives not only a detailed account of the cruelties and violent end of this extraordinary

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despot, but a monograph of the country and people, their poetry, nature, the mysterious hidden mountain glens, the charm of the valleys and simple naïve life of the inhabitants. I will confine myself to a few incidents in the career of the Ti Tai which I myself witnessed.

One day not long after my arrival I was buying some fruit in the bazaar when I heard a piercing shriek, followed by loud wailing. I looked round and saw a gaunt, tattered, half-naked, half-starved old woman, the stare of madness in her wide-gazing eyes.

"Where is my son? Where is my dear little boy? Give him to me back again!" cried the unfortunate creature frantically.

"What is the trouble?" I asked a Sart standing near. He glanced a moment at me and then moved off. I asked another.

"Why is that poor woman crying for her boy?"

He too moved off, muttering something. I caught the words "Ti Tai."

A local acquaintance of mine told me the story afterwards. The poor woman had an only son, a little boy of about thirteen whom she loved to desperation. He was terribly spoiled and made friends with some *kumarbazi* or professional street-gamblers. One day, when she had sent him to buy a bit of food with her last farthing, the young rascal went off and gambled it away. The wretched mother complained to her neighbours and asked them what to do with her unmanageable youngster. Somebody put into her head the fatal notion of appealing to the Ti Tai. The old man listened attentively to her complaint and said:

"Bring your son to me this evening and I will teach him. I promise you he will never gamble again. Come back for him in the morning."

The next day, when she came for her son, the Ti Tai

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THE LATE GENERAL MA AND FAMILY, TI TAI OF KASHGAR

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took her into an inner courtyard and showed her a fearful sight. In the middle of the yard, lashed to a stake firmly planted in the ground, hung the body of her boy with a gaping wound in the throat.

"There you are! Take him with you. I promised you he would not gamble with the *kumarbazi* any more," said the fiend. The poor distraught mother went off her head, and spends her time wandering about the city seeking her boy, dependent upon the alms of the charitable.

Here is another story about him. A Chinaman, an official in the post office, who had no children of his own, adopted the son of a poor Sart, clothed him and gave him a good education. The child grew into a decent, good-mannered lad, and his adopted father and mother were devoted to him. Then one day his real father, who was a thorough ruffian, began to ask for his son back again. The Chinaman incautiously gave him some money. This suited the Sart very well, and he began coming to the Chinaman for money more and more frequently, until one day the latter, getting tired of the process, sent him about his business. The Sart complained to the Ti Tai, who immediately sent for the unfortunate official. Directly he appeared the Ti Tai, who was hopelessly drunk, ordered his soldiers to shoot him then and there, which they did.

A very pretty girl had the misfortune to attract the attention of the old scoundrel, who ordered her parents to send her to him for his harem. When the unfortunate couple, who doted on their daughter, had the temerity to refuse, the devil crucified them both on the walls of his fortress.

When one of his wives annoyed him he had her tongue cut out. Another, who committed the indiscretion of looking out of window at his soldiers drilling in the yard, had her arms tied behind her back and a pole passed

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through them; on this she was slung up and beaten to death.

A favourite method of his for punishing minor offences was to slice the victim on a machine like a chaff-cutter. He used to snip off their fingers joint by joint.

Not content with his military functions, he turned his attention to mining, and worked copper, oil, nephrite, coal, distilled kerosene, and burnt coke, and always extending his territory, expropriating land by compulsion. In the latter case he did not pay in cash, but gave notes promising to pay after the rice harvest, which in practice coincided with the Greek kalends. One day some Sart from whom he had bought land like this, actually had the impudence to come to him in the autumn, after the rice harvest, to ask for his money. The Ti Tai's answer was that the man had no right to it, as the land belonged to the state, and so he ordered the unfortunate fellow to have his arms and legs broken and be thrown into the river.

A whole volume could be filled with the description of the atrocities perpetrated by this monster. He had among other things a mania for building. In a marsh known as Bakalyk, the Place of Frogs, he had a "palace" built for himself, consisting of some courtyards and a few low buildings and one big house with three stories. The house was constructed entirely of thin planks over a frame of poles, the spaces rammed with dry clay. The upper story was the reception-room. When I made my way up the rickety staircase to this audience hall the whole building quivered. The roof was thatched with reeds, and was by no means watertight.

But the Ti Tai was extremely proud of his palace and regarded it as the finest in the world.

One day he asked the Swedish engineer who was putting up a refinery for him:

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"Has your king a palace like mine?"

"No," replied the Swede truthfully, "our king certainly has not a palace like yours!"

"Ha ha!" chuckled the old Chinaman. "Why doesn't he build himself one on the same plan as mine? I will give him a copy."

"Our king is poor," said the Swede, "and could not afford such luxury."

The Ti Tai was delighted with such flattering news, which put him on a much higher plane than the Swedish king.

"And what does your king do when it is raining, and the water comes through the roof?"

"The same as you," imperturbably replied the engineer, "he puts a basin under the hole to catch the drips, and then mops up the water off the floor."

Like all Chinese, the Ti Tai revelled in flattery, even of the most outrageous description.

One day two members of the Russian colony called on him to ask him to sell them a few pounds of gunpowder for their shotguns. He received them very graciously, but absolutely refused to sell them any powder.

"How could I possibly sell Government stores to private persons, least of all to foreign subjects?" he asked them. "The powder is the property of the Chinese Government, and I have to account for every pound of it. Who can guarantee that you are going to use it only for sport?"

While they were drinking the inevitable tea, he asked his visitors about the state of affairs in Soviet Russia.

"The position there is very bad indeed," they replied. "The Bolsheviks have seized all the power and are robbing, destroying, and killing."

"Then why does not one of your old generals seize the power and turn them out?" he asked.

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"Unfortunately we have not got any good generals nowadays," they answered humbly.

"If only I were there I would deal with the Bolsheviks smartly enough! In a very short time there would not be one left alive!" he cried.

"Of course you would," his guests assented.

"Do you really think so?" cried the old man, delighted.

"We are quite sure," they said, amused at the incredible folly of the old ruffian. "Your name alone would be enough to strike terror into their hearts. You are universally acknowledged to be the greatest warrior of the age, and the newspapers of the whole world are full of your praises. The commissars will shake in their shoes when they hear that the famous General Ma is taking the field against them."

"Are the newspapers really writing about me?" he asked.

"Of course they are, everywhere, in India, in Japan, England, France, America . . . everywhere they have heard about you, and are writing about you."

The old villain was overwhelmed with delight and shook hands heartily with his guests.

"What a pleasure it is," he said, as he was saying goodbye, "to meet such highly educated people as you; it is a pleasure indeed to hear your conversation. I would be glad to show you how much I appreciate your company. You happened to mention that you would like a little powder. How much do you want?"

"Oh, General, a few pounds, say three or four," they answered, "if it would be possible to spare us so much?"

"Is that all? That won't last you long. Better take more than that, say ten or fifteen pounds. I'll give the order at once to send it to you," said the Ti Tai.

That very same day they received as a gift all the powder they wanted.

SOME OF THE TI TAI'S VICTIMS

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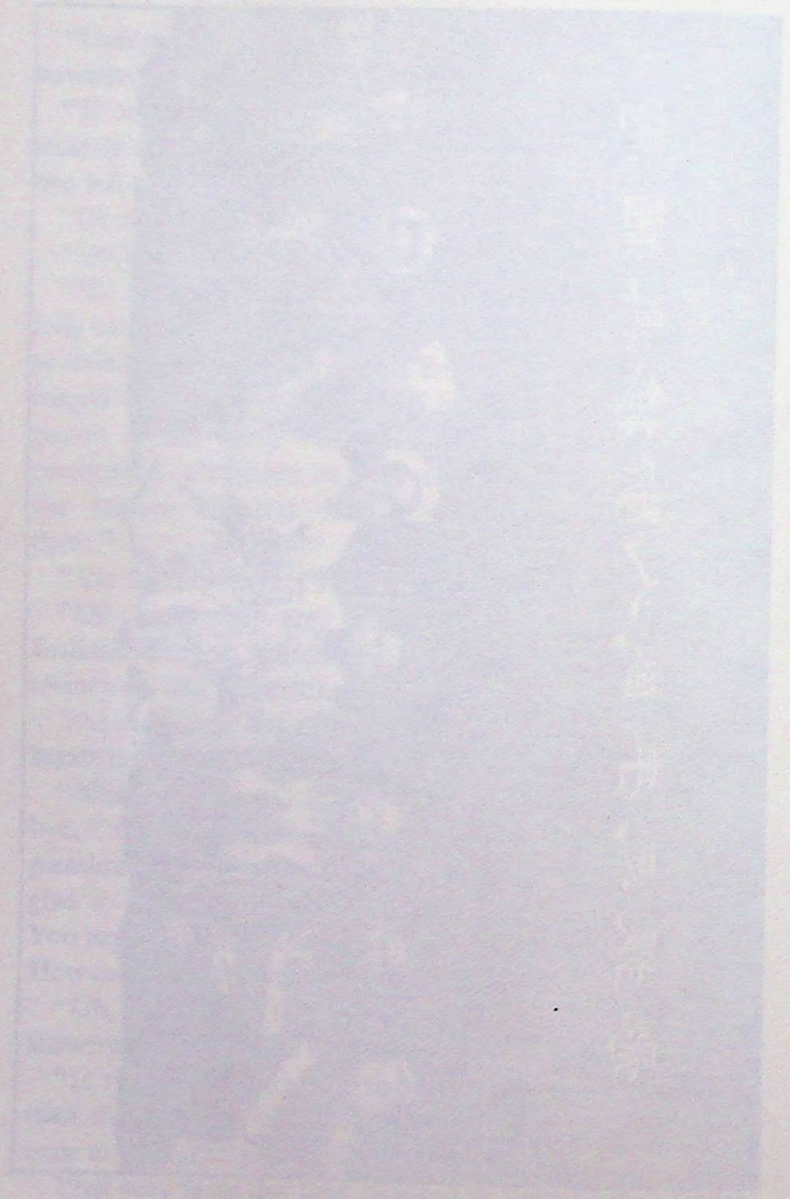

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But it must not be imagined that General Ma was quite a fool, although he was illiterate.

"What do I want with reading and writing?" he used to say. "I am a soldier; I have a clerk to do my reading and writing."

When a wireless station was put up at Kashgar the Ti Tai was very sceptical.

"This is sheer charlatanism," he exclaimed, "those engineers have deceived the fools at Pekin. How can they believe that they can talk to Kashgar by means of those iron towers? I can understand telegrams going along wires, but how can you talk over thousands of *li* just with these things?"

So he refused to be present at the official opening of the station, so as not to lend the dignity of his presence to such an imposture. He even reproached the other Chinese dignitaries:

"Aren't you ashamed to be taken in by such rubbish? You are clever and educated men. Surely you must see that it is impossible to send a telegram over thousands of miles without wires. It is against common sense, and you are going to take part in the swindle!"

According to his lights, General Ma was perfectly logical There are many instances in the history of Science when men have refused to accept obvious facts, merely because they could not account for them, and there are plenty of so-called men of science even to-day who have not proceeded very far from the standpoint of the Chinese general.

His son, commandant of the fortress of Kashgar, Hsieh Tai, was not quite so cruel, perhaps on account of his youth, or perhaps, because he was a slave to the opium pipe, but even he thought nothing of giving his servant three thousand strokes for losing the house-keeping money.

"Opium-smoking is a splendid thing," he used to say, "you will never be ill if you smoke opium."

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Inhaling the scent of flowers or perfumes, on the other hand, he considered very harmful.

"The nose is rapidly corroded by constantly smelling strongly scented flowers," he said. "Look what a lot of men and women here in Kashgar have their noses eaten away; that is all due to too much smelling flowers."

Like a dutiful son, he submitted unquestioningly to his father. The old man, having heard one day that his son had managed to get an uncommonly pretty girl for a "wife," ordered him to hand her over to himself, which the son did without hesitation, as filial piety is regarded by the Chinese as one of the chief virtues.

The fate of General Ma and his son is described in detail in Mr. Skrine's book. The cup of his iniquities was filled to overflowing, and even the Chinese authorities could not stand him any longer. The Governor-General of the Province of Sin Kiang sent a special detachment from Urumchi, which by a clever manœuvre early one morning seized the fortress of Yangi Shar, about five miles from Kashgar, where the general had moved when his famous palace had been burnt down. The commander of the detachment had orders to catch him and bring him alive to Urumchi, with the object, of course, of extorting a big enough ransom out of him. But the old villain had pluck. He put up quite a stout resistance, was wounded, taken out to the city walls and shot, and his body exposed for the people to see that his cruelties were over. His son, too, when called upon to surrender replied by opening fire and was killed at the same time. This happened in July 1924, before my departure from Kashgar.

The Governor-General of Sin Kiang, Du Du, who was killed two years ago, was not far behind General Ma in cruelty, which is innate in the Chinese, of whom it is truly said that they are not endowed with nerves. Unlike Ma,

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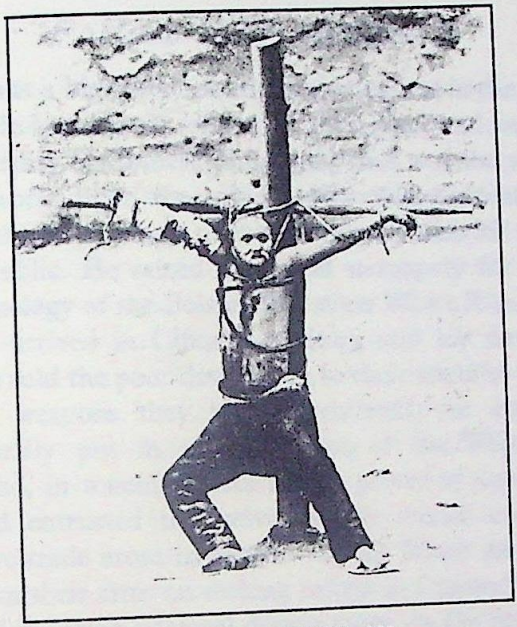

NEMESIS—GENERAL MA

PART OF THE PRICE OF POWER

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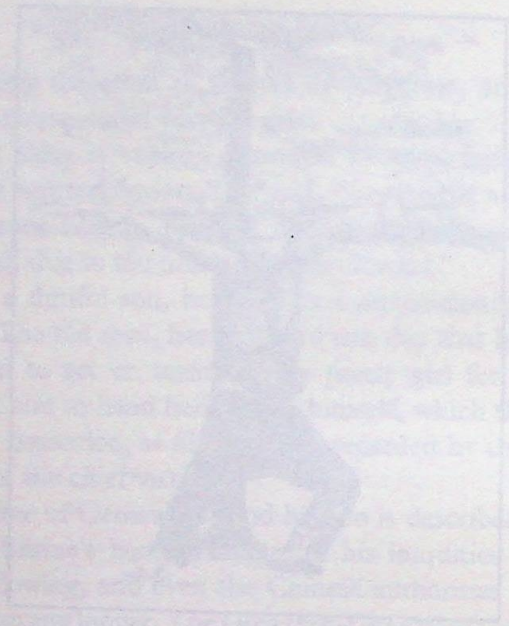

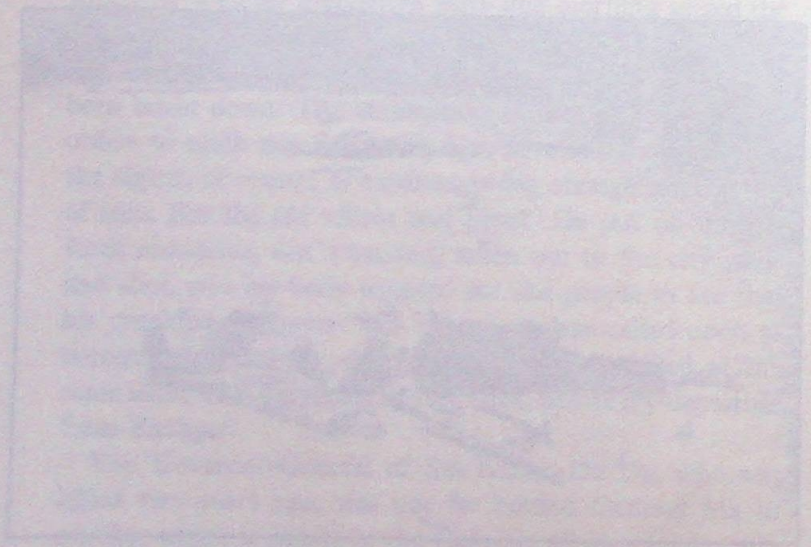

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Follies and Cruelties

Du Du was a highly educated man, of course in the Chinese school. He had a great reputation for a profound knowledge of the history of Chinese philosophy and was the author of several works upon the subject. His philosophical accomplishments, however, in no way interfered with his pillaging of the public. He seized the bread monopoly for himself, on the analogy of the Bolsheviks; when White Russians and refugees arrived in Chinese territory and lay down their arms, he sold the poor devils back to their enemies for cash, and the weapons they had surrendered; he imprisoned and actually put in chains leaders of the White movement who, in touching faith in the power of international law, had entrusted themselves to his tender mercies. A real slave-trade arose in soldiers of the White armies who laid down their arms on seeking refuge in Chinese territory.

One day during a formal dinner party, in the presence of numerous guests, two Chinese officials were shot, one after another, their crime being that in some way they had displeased the tyrant; a third, fearing the same fate, tried to hide, but was at once bayoneted by the soldiers. The dinner went on as though nothing unusual had taken place. As Chinese banquets consist of many dozen courses and last for several hours, there is plenty of time for an execution.

The Chinese, in fact, look upon the dinner as the most convenient time for arrests. A typical instance was that of the Ataman Annenkoff, who had kept up a resolute struggle against the Bolsheviks in Siberia until he was exhausted. Then, with a handful of followers, he was compelled to seek refuge in Chinese territory. As he was a distinguished officer, he was invited to a banquet by Du Du and after dinner arrested, thrown into prison, and chained to the wall of the cell.

Dinners are a particularly convenient occasion for packing

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off any unwanted person to the other world by means of poison. For this reason guests who have any grounds for expecting a dish specially prepared for them by their host always take the precaution of changing the dish served to them, either with that of the host himself if they can manage it, or with their next-door neighbour. The Tao In of Kashgar, for instance, and the Ti Tai hated each other like poison, and they always took this precaution whenever they had occasion to meet at some formal dinner or to entertain each other on any ceremonial occasion.

The cross-roads at the North Gate used to be the scene of almost daily executions on market days. Here they publicly cut off the arms, legs, or heads of offending parties. A special short, broad sword was used for this purpose. The executioner always wiped the sword with a piece of bread, which he would then eat, "so as to be cruel and not weak and pitiful towards men." Then they gave the executioner himself a few good strokes with a whip, "so that he should not feel the pangs of conscience." On each occasion the *amban* or local magistrate was fined two hundred *sar* for negligence in permitting a crime to occur in his district.

One effect of the establishment of the Russian Consulate in Kashgar was the cessation of these public executions and mutilations, and in general the diminution of cruelty, but now, with the development of "national consciousness" the Chinese pay less and less attention to the opinion of Europe on these matters.

When I was in Kashgar they cut off the arms of natives for refusing to change old paper money for the new, a stringent financial measure indeed!

As a matter of fact these cruel punishments and fearful tortures fail in their purpose of terrifying wrongdoers. The thieves of Kashgar were not afraid to burgle even the palace

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of the redoubtable Ti Tai himself. Murders for gain are fairly common, but in this part of China there were no bands of brigands or professional highway robbers.

An educated Chinaman in Europe, if reproached with the cruelties and tortures practised in his country, will indignantly deny the fact, and stoutly maintain that the Chinese courts are in no way inferior to European ones, in justification of which he will point to the recent law on criminal punishment, which was drafted by distinguished European jurists. This is certainly as good as, if not actually superior to, any existing criminal code in Europe. The European and American delegates at the Washington Conference were so enchanted by this wonderful Code and the irreproachable cut of Dr. Wellington Koo's tailed coat that they were almost persuaded to hand over their own nationals to the tender mercies of Chinese jurisdiction. But the Chinese, rather frightened at their own success, begged that the discussion of this question be postponed for three years. For in fact the Chinese courts are just as remote from their Code as is their so-called republic from the its Constitution. I doubt very much whether a copy of the Code is to be found in any court in Sin Kiang. A law book in any case is looked upon as quite superfluous. There was an amusing illustration of this when the representative of the Marconi Company, wanting to buy a parcel of land on which to put up his wireless station, tried to satisfy himself about the law on the subject and asked to be shown a copy of the Code. The Chinese authorities simply could not make out what this Englishman wanted; he was asking for some book or other, and they were honestly surprised that it could be of any use to him.

"We will give you any piece of land you want," they said to him. "You have only to choose your plot and show it to us. We can do everything that is necessary. What do you

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want any book of laws for? We haven't got one and never had nor wanted one."

I fear this account of the dark side of the Chinese character may weary the reader, but it is necessary to complete the picture of life in Kashgar. Conditions there are very far removed from those of the western world of to-day; they are quite mediaeval, totally different from those which Europeans and Americans imagine to be conditions in the republic of the Far East.

My life in this isolated corner of the world would have been very lonesome and dull but for the presence of a few Russians and the British Consulate. Without them I should have found myself transplanted, as it were with a time machine, right back into the days of Marco Polo. But the presence of the British Consulate was a link with the twentieth century and with Europe. Colonel Etherton and Mr. N. Fitzmaurice were extraordinarily kind to me. I, who had been so long shut off from books and the outside world, revelled in the splendid library and in the newspapers and reviews and Reuter's telegrams. It was indeed an "eye into Europe" from another world. The Russian colony and the British were constantly interchanging hospitality, with dinners, tea parties and picnics. In Kashgar all these entertainments are called *tamashá*. Any reception, picnic, even a mere stroll outside the town, a show at a theatre, theatricals, concert, or any form of entertainment is termed a *tamashá*. It is a most useful and comprehensive word. Many things which a simple native of Kashgar would be utterly unable to grasp are quite clear to him if you call them a *tamashá*. When I was out on a geological survey in the neighbourhood of the city, wandering among a labyrinth of vertical walls, canals, and tunnels formed in the loess by desert erosion, any Sart who chanced to meet me would be sure to ask what I was doing. It would be quite impossible

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to explain to him, but he was always perfectly satisfied with the magic words "*Tamashá-ga kelgan*" ("I have come for a *tamashá*"). You can even go into another man's garden and plead the same excuse; it will unquestioningly be accepted as justification of the trespass.

How, for instance, could one possibly get into the thick head of a mediaeval Asiatic what we mean by going for a stroll outside the town? *Tamashá*, of course.

One day I received an invitation to a *tamashá*.

"What is it?" I asked.

"*Kebab*," was the reply, or what we in Russia would call a *shashlyk** with native songs.

Native dinners in Kashgar are the very reverse of the Chinese. They consist usually of only one dish, occasionally two, seldom three. One will be the inevitable *palau* of Central Asia, or *kebab*, or *kavardak*, a kind of stewed mutton with vegetables. Before dinner the *dastarkhan* is essential; this word, properly speaking, means tablecloth. This is spread on a table, if Europeans are present, or on the floor if it is a purely native party, and covered with all sorts of sweetmeats, dried and fresh fruit, jam, water-melons and so on, the whole thing accompanied with tea, friendly chat and even dancing. When the time for the real dinner comes they bring in the *pièce de résistance* in the form of a *palau* or *kebab*, with which the guests set to work to gorge themselves. It would be bad form to start an interesting conversation at this stage. Attention is concentrated upon the serious business in hand. Even during the tea-drinking which follows, a dignified silence is maintained, the better to encourage digestion. Since alcoholic drinks are forbidden and the guests have partaken heartily of a rich and heavy

* Small pieces of mutton cut from the tender meat alternating with pieces of fat, threaded on a skewer and roast over a wood or charcoal fire, a dish fit to set before a king.

Kashmir Treasures Collection. Digitization by eGangotri

meal, for a sparing appetite is an insult to the host, conditions are conducive to somnolence and they may be excused for feeling sleepy.

At the evening party to which I was invited to a *dastarkhan*, a lady, wearing a dress of red silk and a sleeveless black velvet jacket embroidered with gold, her glossy black hair adorned with a golden crown in the form of a garland, with golden ornaments dangling from it, sitting on a cushion on the rug-covered floor, accompanying herself upon the native form of guitar called *dutar*, sang a modern ballad of unknown authorship describing the feats of the Turkestan hero Khal Hodja, who died in the Tian Shan in 1922.

Many years ago Khal Hodja, like so many heroes of Central Asia, was a brigand in Ferghaná. Captured by the Tsar's Government, he was banished to penal servitude in Siberia. Returning to his own country not long before the Bolshevik revolution, Khal Hodja soon declared himself a violent opponent of the Soviets. He gathered together a band of bold spirits and began attacking trains, detachments of the Red Army, and once even captured the town of Andijan, so that he quickly became a national hero of Turkestan. The anti-Bolshevik movement started by him spread all over Turkestan and the oppressed native population placed great hopes on him. In March 1922, when retreating through the mountains into Chinese territory, Khal Hodja was overwhelmed by an avalanche in a deep and narrow valley and his entire band of three hundred men wiped out. Once again fate played into the hands of the Bolsheviks, relieving them of their most dangerous enemy and scattering the last hopes of the wretched population of Ferghaná. The natives of Kashgar took to heart the disaster to their kinsmen and passionately long for the restoration of the old régime in Turkestan. Their feelings have found expression in verse and music, on the theme of the death of Khal Hodja, in a

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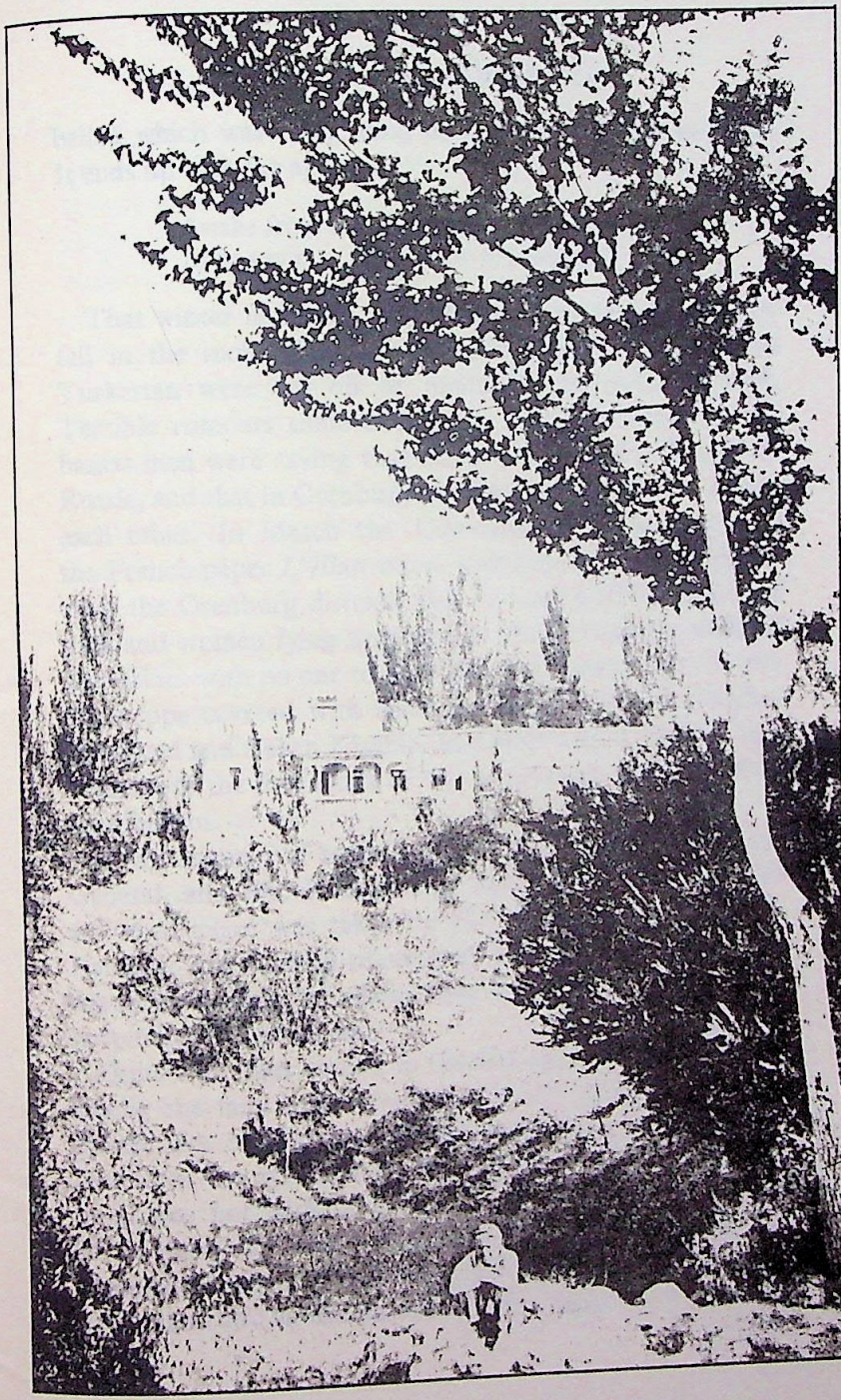

BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL, KASHGAR, FROM THE WEST

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ballad which was being sung in Kashgar as early as 1922. It ends up with the appeal:

> Awake from thy sleep under the snow!
> Arise again to protect the oppressed!

That winter had been very severe. A great deal of snow fell in the mountains and communications with Russian Turkestan were cut off or rendered extremely difficult. Terrible rumours came over to us from that side. In the bazaar men were saying that there was a fearful famine in Russia, and that in Orenburg people were killing and eating each other. In March the Consulate received a copy of the French paper *L'Illustration*, with gruesome photographs from the Orenburg district; they showed piles of bodies of men and women lying unburied in the cemeteries, dead of starvation, with no one to bury them. Another view showed the steppe covered with snow, and dotted with the bodies of starved and frozen Kirghiz. In a land once so fruitful and prosperous the first fruits of the handiwork of Lenin were cannibalism.

In the summer of 1922 Colonel Etherton, British Consul-General, and Mr. Fitzmaurice, Vice-Consul, left Kashgar and their place was taken by Mr. C. P. Skrine and Mr. Harding. The Russian colony gave a hearty send-off to their departing friends, to whom they were indebted for much hospitality and kindness.

Quite a stir was caused in the Russian colony, especially among the lady members, when it was known that Mrs. Skrine was coming too, as that meant the presence of a hostess in the splendid building of the British Consulate. So it was not without a little inner trepidation that our ladies accepted their first invitation to a tea-party in the Consulate garden. There was the language difficulty, of course, and also an understandable self-consciousness on the

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part of women who were meeting a lady fresh from one of the great capitals of Europe, when they had been buried away for years in a social wilderness. But they were at once put at their ease by the unaffected simplicity and perfect tact of their hostess, with whom they all fell in love at once. Tea was laid under the shade of the lofty trees between clumps of rose-bushes and the lily pond; the perfect service and table appointments, and then the sight of an immense samovar puffing forth clouds of steam, a sight that will win any Russian heart, at once created an atmosphere of unconstrained and friendly cheerfulness. In spite of the inconvenience of talking through an interpreter, conversation became positively lively and every one enjoyed herself immensely. That was a red-letter day for our poor little Kashgar society, as it opened out a new vista of possibilities of social entertainment among a small colony that was suffering to no slight extent from depression and monotony.

They were not disappointed, for Mr. and Mrs. Skrine throughout their stay in Kashgar livened things up immensely, and brought a lot of brightness and happiness, thanks to their numerous *tamashás*, into families that had forgotten their *joie de vivre*. The charming young hostess of the British Consulate was in fact a public benefactor, who won the affectionate gratitude of us all.

It was above all the children of our little colony that were delighted. Poor little souls, they had neither toys nor books, and their life had not been a very happy one so far, but now a whole series of entertainments followed at the Consulate, crowned by the arrival of no less a personage than Father Christmas himself, with an enormous sack full of all sorts of lovely things from Europe, toys such as they had never even dreamt of before; small wonder that they firmly believed in a world of magic, represented in Kashgar by the Good Fairy in the gardens of the British Consulate.

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CHAPTER IV

Beasts, birds, and plants—The opium problem from a new angle—Excursion to Maral Bashi—Sport and natural history—Am nearly drowned

In winter from beyond the Tian Shan visitors from the north appear in Kashgar, geese, duck, snipe, and other birds. There are not very many of them, as the main line of bird migration from Siberia passes further to the east, but still there are plenty of birds in the neighbourhood of Kashgar by the unfrozen streams and warm springs. Gardens where there are high trees are filled in winter every evening with flocks of black crows, *Corvus intermedius*, Adams, and rooks, *C. frugilegus*, which raise a terrible din. Before sunset there fly down the river flock after flock of ruddy sheldrake, *Casarca ferruginea*, Pall., their ringing note resounding through the air, a kind of blend between the note of a bugle and a dog's bark, from which the Kirghiz have given this handsome duck the characteristic name, *It-ala-kaz*, the "variegated dog-goose."

With the arrival of winter cold, the splendid spring of pure water that never freezes near the gardens of the British Consulate is turned into a regular zoo. Great flocks of starlings weigh down the trees and fill the air with their pleasant chatter and whistles, just as they do in London on the cornices of the British Museum. Our Kashgar starlings are *Sturnus nitens* and *St. purpurascens*, which migrate to India in winter, when the common European species, *St. vulgaris* takes their place. Every year there come here to winter individuals of the great white heron, *Egretta alba*, L., and occasionally the common grey one, *Ardea cinerea*, L. Immense flocks of sparrows, *Passer indicus*, settle in spots warmed by the sun, and in the marsh here you may meet

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with Baillon's crake, *Porzana bailloni*, Vieill., which is extraordinarily tame. It will allow itself to be picked up by the hand without offering any resistance, and when put down again does not make an immediate attempt to escape, but strolls quietly off, pecking at seeds. Its elder brother the water rail, *Rallus aquaticus*, L., resembles it in showing no fear of man. Wrens, *Troglodytes pallidus*, slip through the bushes, and four or five snipe, *Scolopax stenura*, Kuhl., the Asiatic representative of the common European species, spend the winter in this marsh. And towards dusk two or three mallard are sure to fly down.

I never used to shoot on this marsh, going for my sport a mile or two further east, among the paddy fields which extend between the city walls and the swamps. There there were plenty of snipe, and I was fairly sure to come across the great snipe, *Capella media*, Lath., twice as big as the common one, rather like a woodcock, but greyer in colour. It is always met with alone, hence one of its names, the solitary snipe, avoiding not only the company of other birds, but even of its own kind. Hodgson called it *Scolopax solitaria*.

In spite of the cold, in our zoo on bright days we could hear the pleasant song of the wagtail, *Motacilla dukhunensis*, Gould, the invariable denizen of every native garden court-yard and street throughout Turkestan. We have two other wagtails as well, *M. personata*, Gould, and *M. luzoniensis*, Scop.

On the clay walls of the British Consulate one could often get a glimpse of the red flash of the wings of the wall-creeper, *Tichodroma phoenicoptera*, a handsome bird, industriously collecting spiders and insects hibernating in the crevices. These mountain-lovers have been driven down to the plains by the sharp frosts and deep snows of their own alps. They look like red poppies stuck to the walls. Another beautiful bird is our kingfisher, *Alcedo bengalensis*, like a living

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emerald fluttering over the water. I used to enjoy watching these birds immensely, and often spent whole hours alone with Nature at my private little zoo.

The harbingers of the spring were the hoopoes, inseparable from the villages of Turkestan. The appearance of kites, *Milvus govinda*, Sykes, poised in the blue sky of Kashgaria and their penetrating, shattering cry was a sure sign of the first hot weather. By that time the fields are covered with green, the trees put forth their foliage, the northern visitors fly away home, the local residents disperse to their nesting grounds, the crows make for the fields, and our zoo is deserted.

Green foliage conceals the birds, and it is difficult to pick them out. Long and patiently must one gaze at the dense foliage of the lofty poplars to find where the so-called Spanish sparrows are nesting, that is *Passer hispanicus*, turned up God knows whence, or the gorgeous grosbeaks, *Carpodacus rubicilla*, which look just like sparrows dipped in blood, or our local golden oriole, *Oriolus kundoo*, Sykes; its whistle can be heard often enough, but the bird is visible only when it takes a flight. Both the Kashgar Sarts and the Chinese are fond of birds; their children leave the nests alone, so consequently the village gardens have their own special fauna. The Sarts often keep cock quails and chukar, the Central Asian partridge, in cages for fighting. The cock birds are very pugnacious and their fights are a favourite organized sport among the natives of Turkestan. Very good prices are given for stout fighters and betting on the results sometimes reaches considerable figures. The characteristic note of the quail and chukking of the chukars are usually to be heard in the bazaars of the towns and villages. The Kashgar quail appears to be a distinct species. The chukar varies too over the area, and different forms are recognized in Yarkand and in Ladak.

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It is curious that on the other side of the Old World, in Spain, the local partridge, a cousin of our eastern chukar, is also used as a fighting-bird, and is caught by the same means as with us. Perhaps the custom was left there by the Arabs, whose influence is so strongly marked in both Spain and in Kashgar

The chukar is a confiding bird, with a marked tendency towards domestication, but man persistently abuses its confidence for the sake of its excellent flesh. Where they are left in peace, as for instance in Little Tibet, they make themselves at home near houses, and are as natural members of the garden fauna as sparrows and pigeons. In one of my mines in a mountain gorge, where I used to protect them, they ran about in flocks right up to the workings, just like domestic poultry, not frightened away even by the firing of shots. If one escapes from its cage, it does not fly away into the mountains or fields, but settles down in some neighbouring garden, usually selecting a woman as a protectress. When I lived in Tashkent one of these birds spontaneously attached itself to a girl I knew, followed her into the house, and became quite tame. It used to feed at her side, perch on her shoulder, and follow her about the place. Once, when my wife was making jam in the garden, as was the custom in our country, a pair of these birds flew up, one settling on a tree near by and the other on her shoulder. In India *Caccabis chukar* is a familiar sporting bird.

My favourite pets in Kashgar were doves. There are two genera represented in the district. One, *Streptopelia stoliczkæ*, is about as big as a pigeon, of a delicate greyish lilac, in places flushed with pink, with a velvety black collar. It lives only in villages and gardens, and in Kashgaria is never found far from human dwellings.

The other kind is much smaller, of a uniform pinkish brown colour. This species, *Peristera cambayensis*, Gmel., is

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the one that is often kept in cages in Europe and known as the Egyptian dove. Both are inseparable features of every house, garden, or yard in the country, especially the second, which seems especially to attach itself to man, frequenting cart-sheds, storehouses, verandahs, and even rooms if the doors or windows are left open. Every year a pair of these charming birds reared their young in my room, making their nest on the stove. The cock bird collected the material and the hen made the nest, acknowledging each contribution with a grateful little coo. The young birds left the nest when they could hardly fly, spending all their time in the yard, where their parents came and fed them. In a few days they became independent, and then the old birds patched up the nest and got ready for a second brood.

I did not tame the young doves, but taught the older birds first to peck at bread pills in the window. They were very fond of these and soon learnt to take them from a saucer, then from a saucer held in my hand, and, last of all, to feed direct from my hand. They would perch on my arm or shoulder, and if I lay in bed late in the morning, they would fly to me and perch on my pillow or head. It was only the smaller species that I could tame like this. The bigger kind used to fly up to the window, but would never feed out of my hand. It is the original native of the district, as the smaller species was introduced from Ferghaná at the end of the nineteenth century. Every pair chooses its own definite spot, where it nests regularly every year, driving away intruders. My doves recognized me in the street and would fly down to greet me, but never asked for food there. They were afraid of other people, even when sitting in my room. It is an interesting thing that neither of these doves lives anywhere in Central Asia in a truly wild state, such as in forests, but only in association with mankind. In Central Africa, on the other hand, two very closely related, if not

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identical, species live only in the forest. The smaller kind, *Peristera*, it is true, sometimes lives in the towns, but the other avoids the neighbourhood of mankind. Can this mean that both these birds were introduced into Central Asia from Africa, and in their new home do not want to be parted from their protector who brought them? It is curious that the Kashgar dove, *Streptopelia*, is unknown in Western Turkestan. How, then did it find its way here from Africa?

There are several species of mammals in the Kashgar district which have not been properly described. A wild cat, for instance, related to the jungle cat, *Felis chaus*, a special kind of marten, and at least one new species of bat.

There is one wild creature in Central Asia which shows a remarkable attachment to man in spite of its nocturnal habits, that is, the hedgehog. We have three species, *Erinaceus auritus* in the Kirghiz steppe, *E. russowi* in Western, and *E. albiventris* in Eastern Turkestan. They are smaller than the European species, more yellowish in colour, with broader ears. They are all three very much alike and equally attached to mankind. Everybody knows the sulky character of the common European hedgehog, how it rolls itself into a ball on the approach of a man, how difficult it is to persuade it to unroll, how viciously it snorts at its supposed enemy, and tries to prick with its bristles anyone who tries to touch it. Our little Asiatic hedgehog behaves like this only towards animals, but at the sight of a human being it not only does not roll itself into a ball, but does not make any attempt to escape; it will allow itself to be picked up like a kitten. If one of these little creatures is attacked by dogs, which set up a terrific barking, it rolls itself up in self-defence, but directly a man appears it runs to him as though to its natural protector. If you pick one up and put it on your lap it will lie there like a kitten and be quite pleased to have its neck tickled, or if you stroke its little velvety

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tummy it will lower its spines flat so to have its back stroked. But that is not all. If you put it down on the table it will readily feed out of your hand, taking a sip of milk or a tiny piece of meat. It is really an extraordinary thing, for it is an entirely wild little animal, that has probably never seen a man before, much less been handled by one, yet when captured it will behave just like a kitten that has been civilized, so to speak, from time immemorial. I have found these little hedgehogs in the Kirghiz steppes, in gardens in Tashkend, in the mountains of Tian Shan, and in the deserts and gardens of Kashgar, and everywhere they have been perfectly tame, coming up to me freely to be fed or caressed.

The natives of Kashgar are fond of keeping wild animals in captivity. We often used to be honoured by visits from a splendid *kiik* or ibex, *Capra sibirica*. It used to come to us over the roofs of houses and along the tops of walls, like a cat, taking them no doubt for its native rocks and crags. It was very fond of bread and especially of tobacco, which it would chew as readily as any Sart or a Yankee. Gazelles are very fond of tobacco too, both the Turkestan kind, *Gazella subgutterosa*, and its larger eastern sister, *G. yarkandensis*. They are easily tamed and will come into a room to beg for a cigarette. This taste may be verified at the zoo. When we wanted to entice him from the bottom of the garden we found it enough to show a cigarette case and tap it, when he would come bounding up for his favourite dainty. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to keep such animals in or near Kashgar, as sooner or later they fall the prey of the street dogs. Like the streets of Constantinople in the good old days, those of Kashgar are patrolled by hordes of ownerless dogs. Most of them are mangy or suffering from a terrible disease that affects these animals in the tropics, leishmaniosis, due to a parasite in the blood, *Leishmania infantum*, which is equally troublesome to human children. It gives

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the poor suffering creatures a most repulsive aspect. By day they are quiet, inoffensive animals, spending most of the time sleeping in the streets or in dens dug by themselves in the walls and fences. But at night they set forth on their marauding expeditions. Then no fence nor wall of any kind will keep them out, as they seem to develop a sort of diabolical cunning. Sheep, goats, calves, poultry, all come alike to their greedy maws. The natives do not take any steps to counteract the nuisance, much less to destroy the brutes. Cases of hydrophobia are by no means rare among them, when they bite humans and dogs, but, strange to say, cases of hydrophobia among human beings have not been known in Kashgar for thirty years, according to the observations of Russian and Swedish doctors.

I used to draw a great deal of entertainment from the friendship of a young snow leopard, *Panthera uncia*, which was kept in captivity by a Sart acquaintance of mine. In marked contrast to his better known cousin, the common leopard of Africa and India, which we Russians know in the Caucasus, the snow leopard of Central Asia is very readily tamed, and in captivity becomes quiet, well behaved and very friendly towards humans. I have known several instances when they have been caught young and brought up as domestic pets, just like dogs, living about the house and not touching the poultry. The only inconvenience was that they became too affectionate and their playfulness became a bore, as they were always teasing people to have a romp with them.

The one in question was extraordinarily intelligent. When let out of his cage he would at once start playing, and if his game became a bit too rough, it was only necessarily to call him smartly to order and he would stop at once. I easily taught him to understand several words of command, which he always obeyed. One day, when he developed a

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nasty sore on his back, they brought him to the dressing-station of the Russian doctor. He quietly allowed the doctor to shave his back, clean and dress it. He stood still through the whole operation, gently licking the doctor's arm, evidently understanding that the man was doing him good. Not many human children would stand quietly and let the doctor operate without fuss and tears.

The flora is very interesting too. There is a peculiar shrub which produces a red berry something like a cherry, not bad eating, very early in the spring. The natives, for some reason best known to themselves, associate it with English history, and call it *djenistá*, that is to say, the *planta genesta** that gave its name to the dynasty of the Plantagenets. We may observe that in Europe several plants have received this name, but the word *genesta* is certainly of Asiatic origin. It is not the only Central Asiatic word which has found its way into European languages. Even the very English word "hurrah!" and the same thing in Russian, *urá*, is nothing more nor less than the war cry of the Turki hordes, of the Kirghiz, and, no doubt, of their ancestors the Scythians, brought into Europe by the Huns and left there. Literally, it means Slay! Kill! *urr!* in Turki. Another is the Turkish and Russian *uragan*, from which the French made *ouragan* and the English "hurricane."

Another Central Asiatic plant may well have a great future in the textile industry. It is a low-growing shrub with a bunch of pink flowers, known by the native names of

* "The Broom, formerly called *Planta genista*, was the *Gen* of the *Celts*, and the *Genêt* of the French. It was the badge of a long race of British kings, the Plantagenets. Geoffrey, Earl of Anjou . . . commonly wore a broom in his bonnet. . . His son, Henry, has been called the Royal Sprig of Genista, and the broom was worn by all his descendants, down to the last of the Plantagenets, Richard III."—Anne Pratt, *Flowering Plants of Great Britain*, i, p. 158.

Botanically *Genista*, Dyer's green-weed, is distinct from the broom, *Cytisus scoparius*.—M.B.

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kendyr or *turká*. There are two species, *Apocynum venetum* in Western, and *A. hendersonii*, Hook, in Eastern Turkestan. Both kinds yield a first-rate, thin, very long fibre like flax. Young plants cut in the spring give a thin, white, lustrous, thread-like silk, for which, indeed, tissues woven from it may be mistaken. If the fibre is taken in the autumn, when the stalk is mature, it is coarser in texture, brown in colour like jute, but softer and thinner. This fibre is not only extremely strong, but has also the highly important feature of not rotting in water and not being spoilt by damp. It would be hard to think of a more suitable material for fishing-nets, marine ropes, and similar tackle. In Khiva and on the Sea of Aral fishing-nets, lines, ropes, etc., are all made from *kendyr*, and fishermen are never tired of singing its praises. But there is no organized *kendyr* industry. The plant grows wild in abundance along the sandy banks of the Amu Daryá, and women of the Kara Kalpaks, or Black Caps, whom I identify with the Melanchlaenoi of Herodotus, work it up in their homes and make various things out of it. A perennial plant, it will stand severe frosts down to $-25°$ and even $-30°$ C., and requires a certain moisture in the soil. I think it might be successfully cultivated in many lands and be an important adjunct to industry.

The third interesting plant of Kashgaria is the *tugrak*, *Populus diversifolia*. This is a tree, sometimes very high, just like European poplars, only the leaves are thick and hard. The remarkable thing about it is that together with the ordinary foliage you will suddenly notice branches growing out of the trunk with long, thin, delicate leaves like those of the willow. It has the unusual property of tolerating a highly saline soil and in fact actually forms great forests on clayey soils, where both in summer and in winter the ground looks as if it is covered with a white film of saltlike snow.

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In connection with the vegetation of Chinese Turkestan, we must not pass without mention one vegetable product which plays a dominating role in the life of the Chinese and also to a certain extent of the local Sarts. That is opium.

I do not think there is any other subject in which the ignorance of the inner life and psychology of the Chinese on the part of Europeans is shown up more glaringly than in the clumsy and spontaneous interference of the peoples of the West in their struggle with a custom so profoundly rooted in the people of China from time immemorial as the smoking of opium. Never has the hypocrisy of Europe and America been more luminously exposed than when they saw this mote in the eye of their Chinese neighbour, but were blind to the beams in their own.

In the first place I, who am a non-smoker, must say that the *moderate* smoking of opium causes a man just as much physical and moral harm as does the smoking of tobacco, that is to say, practically negligible. Real damage is done only by the smoking of opium in excess. Such harm as it does is purely personal. It is, too, an expensive luxury and so its abuse is available only to the wealthy. Those who indulge in moderation do not experience any physical harm and often enough attain a ripe old age. As to its action upon the brain, the smoking of opium develops in a man the feeling of excellence over others, self-confidence, a certain boastfulness; it reduces caution and fear, but it never excites to disturbance or violence, brawling or murder, nor does it blunt the feeling of responsibility, like the strong alcoholic drinks which are the vice of the West. The opium smoker, when he leaves this hard world of reality, does harm to none but himself, for the most abandoned opium-smoker is no danger to others. He sleeps peacefully, wakes up, has another whiff and goes off again. Of course, I am not recommending the replacement of spirits by opium. Both are

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evils, both are narcotics, but strong alcohol is immeasurably worse, for its over-indulgence involves serious harm to the organism, undermining its health and involving even the following generation in its disastrous results.

Are not the Chinese right when they say to the peoples of the West, who have made such efforts to cure them of the bad habit of smoking opium, "Physician, heal thyself!"? The League of Nations is wasting time and funds upon the hopeless task of weaning millions from a habit rooted in their race for thousands of years. Surely it were better to spend the money and the effort nearer home, on the struggle with alcoholism, the scourge of our western civilization, and leave the millions of Chinamen the League's own medicine of Self-Determination?

It would not be worth discussing the struggle with opium if it were not that the innocent eloquence and high-sounding resolutions of the Opium Committee did not produce a most disastrous reaction upon the unfortunate people of China. For the Republican authorities, wishing to be up-to-date and show the world that they are just as modern and advanced as the states of Europe, have issued throughout all provinces the sternest decrees for the suppression of opium-smoking and prohibition of the cultivation of the poppy, actually going so far as to subject infringement of the decree to the penalty of execution! The meddling by the sentimentalists of Europe in matters that they do not understand has actually involved the capital punishment for the sin of growing poppies. In one province the decree was calmly ignored, as the local authorities were all addicted to the habit, or else engaged in a very profitable traffic in the drug. In another, they made use of it by proclaiming a monopoly of its sale, to their own great advantage. In a third the heads of the guilty rolled upon the ground, smokers, growers, and dealers, if they were so much as suspected.

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If a few poppy seeds fell by accident on a man's land and flowered, it was enough to cost him his head.

Of course, all this was accompanied by the extortion and cruelty customary in China. If the suspected party were not in a position to buy his freedom, then, as a warning to others, he was placed in a cage standing on a pile of thin bricks, with his head protruding through a hole between a couple of planks, the famous torture of the kang. Every day they would take away one brick, so that the poor devil's body was gradually stretched until it was hanging by the neck till it broke. The head was then hung from the city walls. That will teach him to smoke opium!

Can the faddists who sit and work in the comfortable offices on the banks of Lake Leman have the remotest idea of the suffering, of the mental and physical torture in which their meddling has involved the unfortunate population of China, whom they are so tenderly weaning from this dreadful habit of smoking opium?

In Kashgar trade in opium does not exist officially, and its importation is forbidden. Unofficially it is flourishing. The Soviet Government, having forbidden its cultivation in Semirechie, soon realized what an important article of commerce opium offered with China, and began to encourage its cultivation, reserving for itself the monopoly of its collection and sale in India and Kashgaria, organizing a peculiar system of barter. In Kashgaria there is a considerable production of hashish, for which *Cannabis indica* is specially cultivated. This is smuggled into India and sold there by merchants, who then go into Afghanistan, where they buy opium. Persian opium is the best in the world and is smuggled into Kashgaria. That is how the international circulation of narcotics is effected. Opium smugglers run little risk, as the goods are portable and the value high; it is not difficult to tip the Chinese frontier guards, for what

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Chinaman could resist the allurement of the drug that brings his soul peace and oblivion and carries him away into the world of sweet dreams and fantasies?

In the rare event of the Chinese authorities "officially" seizing a large consignment of opium which it is impossible to hide, a public *auto-da-fé* is organized. It goes without saying that the greater part of the confiscated opium finds its way into the pockets of the authorities themselves, and only a small proportion is publicly burnt. Such an entertainment as this brings together a great throng of sightseers. Inhaling the sweet smoke of their beloved herb, authorities and people alike wonder at the stupidity of Europe insisting upon demanding the senseless burning of such precious substance. In their hearts they curse the foreign devils for their stupid interference.

Mr. Skrine invited me to join him on two excursions in Kashgaria, for which I was very grateful, as it gave me an opportunity of seeing a good deal more of the region than would otherwise have been possible. One was to the west, to the foothills of the granite massif forming the northern group of Kungur and Chakrash, the other to the east, to Maral Bashi, the Yarkand Daryá and the edge of the great desert of Takla Makan. The trip to the valleys of the Karatash and of the Kaying, the Valley of the Birches, to the glaciers of Kungur has been described in detail by Mr. Skrine in his book. The Happy Valley, as we called Kaying, is formed of limestones and shales of carboniferous age, strongly folded, and contorted, in places actually vertical. The immense folds form massive crumpled mountains. In the lower part of the valley the limestones are rich in fossils, molluscs and plant remains; in one spot I saw a great trunk of a *Lepidodendron*. In the upper portion they are intersected by porphyrite dykes. In one place in the valley of the Karatash the natives work coal.

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[Photo by C. P. Skrine

THE "HAPPY VALLEY," KAYING JILGHA

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Birds, Beasts, and Plants

The road from Kashgar to Maral Bashi, Stag's Head, follows the plain, but the scenery is very varied. On leaving the Kashgar oasis and coming out into the waterless plain beyond Faizabad, on the far horizon, from a dead flat surface there stands out a mountain in the form of a lofty cone, like an isolated volcano, and it remains there unchanged all the way to the town of Maral Bashi, gradually increasing in size as one draws nearer, until it can be distinguished as an immense mountain mass cut by gorges and ravines, inviting by its wild, mysterious appearance, by the riddle of its position and by the lonelinsss and gloom of its naked rocks and defiles. This is Mazar Tau, the tomb mountain. From the north and east, and partly from the south, Mazar Tau is surrounded in a crescent by a chain of low separate hills which are independent of the actual foothills of the mountain and several miles away from them. These hills have a peculiar shape: the side facing the mountain is almost sheer, while the other side falls away till its melts into the plain. The eye of the practised geologist sees at once the explanation of this peculiar structure. Mazar Tau is an immense mass of basalt which has lifted up the horizontal Eocene beds of the plain till they have burst like a blister. Evidently during the Tertiary Epoch this huge cone was raised many thousands of feet above the level of the plain of Maral Bashi. Erosion has removed the soft sedimentary deposits, leaving only the row of small hills, exposing the core of the volcano, which in turn is now being eaten away by the weather into ravines and water-courses.

When one is riding in the opposite direction, the far distance is dominated by the huge mass of Kungur and it is only when seen thus from the distance that one can realize how much higher it is than the surrounding mountains.

The so-called "desert forest" is very interesting. It can be seen along the road that follows the river Tiumen. It consists

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of the varied-leafed poplar mentioned above and two other kinds of poplar, *Populus euphratica* and *P. pruinosa*, all called *turak* or *tugrak* by the natives, tamarisks, *Tamarix gallica*, Linn, and *Myricaria germanica*, Desf., willows and *Ammodendron karelini*, a peculiar kind of thorny bush, the pods of which carry seeds that are the favourite food of the pheasants.

These desert forests have a curious appearance alongside the rivers and occasional lakes, recalling the riverside thickets of Turkestan. Farther from the river their soil is a sandy clay or fine sand covered with salt like snow; here, instead of grass, there grow glassworts, *Salsola*, of different colours, green, yellow, red, which give a fantastic appearance to the scenery. The water in the subsoil here is not deep, only a few feet below the surface, but, like the river water, is brackish. In places the springs and rivers are tapped by canals for irrigating the fields of the few scattered villages. On this salt soil, in the dry air, under the hot sun of Kashgaria, there ripen the most wonderful, fragrant melons, with much better flavour than those of Kashgar, but the water-melons are not so successful, absorbing a saltish taste from the water.

Another characteristic element in the local landscape is afforded by a peculiar structure of sand hummock. It commonly happens in the plains of Central Asia that the salt, clayey, arid surface is covered with low hummocks, on top of each of which is a tuft of some grass or shrub. But in the district I am describing in the forest there are expanses of sand filled up with hillocks running to 10 or even 15 feet in height, each bearing on top a shrub or group of trees, sometimes quite high and thick. These hillocks are often so close together that there is no space to ride between them. When you go through them you feel as in some strange labyrinth, where the roots of the trees are

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high above your head. The cause of this peculiar form of vegetable growth is to be found in the struggle of the plant with the creeping sands. The plant stretches higher and higher as fast as the wind heaps up the sand against the roots and lower branches, just as gardeners sometimes do. These conical hillocks look like the pyramidal termite nests of Central Africa, which also frequently have clumps of shrubs or trees on top of them. The salt content of the soil and the amount of clay in it contribute to the formation of these odd hummocks. In districts of shifting sands and wind-blown dunes such pyramids are not formed. The wind not only blows sand up against the roots, but also blows out, so to speak, intervals between the hillocks where the sand is not held fast by roots and by this means gradually lowers the ground level. One strange result of this is that many very old roads in Turkestan are at a lower level than the surrounding country, as though sunk in an artificial trench. During the long, dry, hot season, the material of the road, especially where it runs through a deposit of soft loess, is ground by the feet of passing animals into an extremely fine dust, which is carried away in clouds by the breeze and deposited on the country around.

One of the most important shrubs which contribute to the formation of these hillocks is an interesting bush called *Nitraria stroberi*, Linn, with small, greyish-green, leathery leaves and edible black berries. These are rather salt in taste, but not unpleasant. This plant has a remarkably extensive area of distribution. It grows in desert places not only in Persia, Turkestan, the Kirghiz steppes, the south-eastern parts of Russia, and in Semirechie, Kashgaria, Mongolia, and distant Tibet, but also in the deserts of Australia, and I have also come across it in South Africa. There can hardly be any other kind of plant which has won so wide a distribution by purely natural means, without the interference of man.

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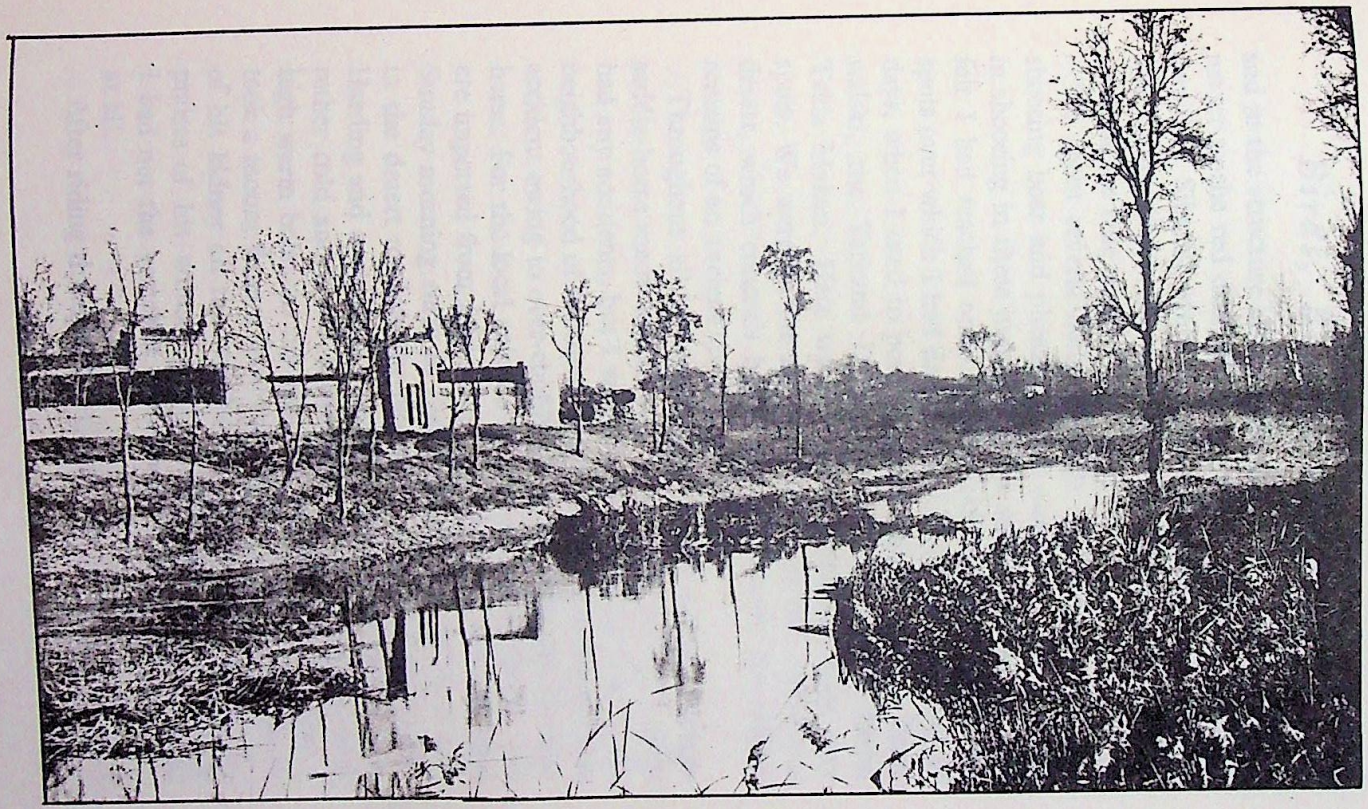
The district I have been describing has a rich fauna. It is haunted by boar, gazelle, wolves, a rather small species of hare which I think is distinct from *Lepus lehmani*, Eversman, and also lynxes. In the village of Urdaklyk, "The Place of Ducks," I met a party of seven natives on horseback, and on the wrist of each sat an eagle, trained for hunting. They had come to hunt foxes. Bird life is abundant too; pheasants swarm and there are several kinds of wild duck and geese. Among the shrubs and bushes I often came across a bird that is very rare in museums, the desert jay, *Podoces hendersoni*, Hume; sometimes it would utter a whistle, sometimes a jarring note, something like the neigh of a foal.

Kashgar and Maral Bashi are a hundred and forty-five miles apart, and the neighbourhood of the latter is very different from that of Kashgar. The latter, as I have said, is situated in a waterless desert, and without artificial irrigation there would be neither vegetation nor life; even the banks of the rivers are bare and barren. Maral Bashi on the other hand is surrounded by green, with excellent pastures, abundance of lakes, the banks of the river a mass of reeds, bushes and trees, and even places that are not irrigated are full of life and verdure. The soil is very fertile and man can support himself and his beasts here without artificial irrigation. The Kashgar Daryá forms extensive floods at Maral Bashi, the refuge of duck and geese. They reach the Yarkand Daryá, which flows from the south. The banks of the latter are covered with *tugai*, that is, grass and thickets with trees. Formerly there were plenty of deer here, and tiger too. I saw local deer in the garden of the *amban* or magistrate of Maral Bashi, a stag, a hind, and a fawn. This was probably *Cervus yarkandensis*, a species distinct from *C. xanthopygus*, under which name Milne Edwards in 1867 described a variety of the Siberian maral or wapiti, *C. canadensis*, var. *sibiricus*, Sev. They have a reddish-brown spot on the rump



KASHGAR DARYÁ ONE MILE BELOW MARAL BASHI

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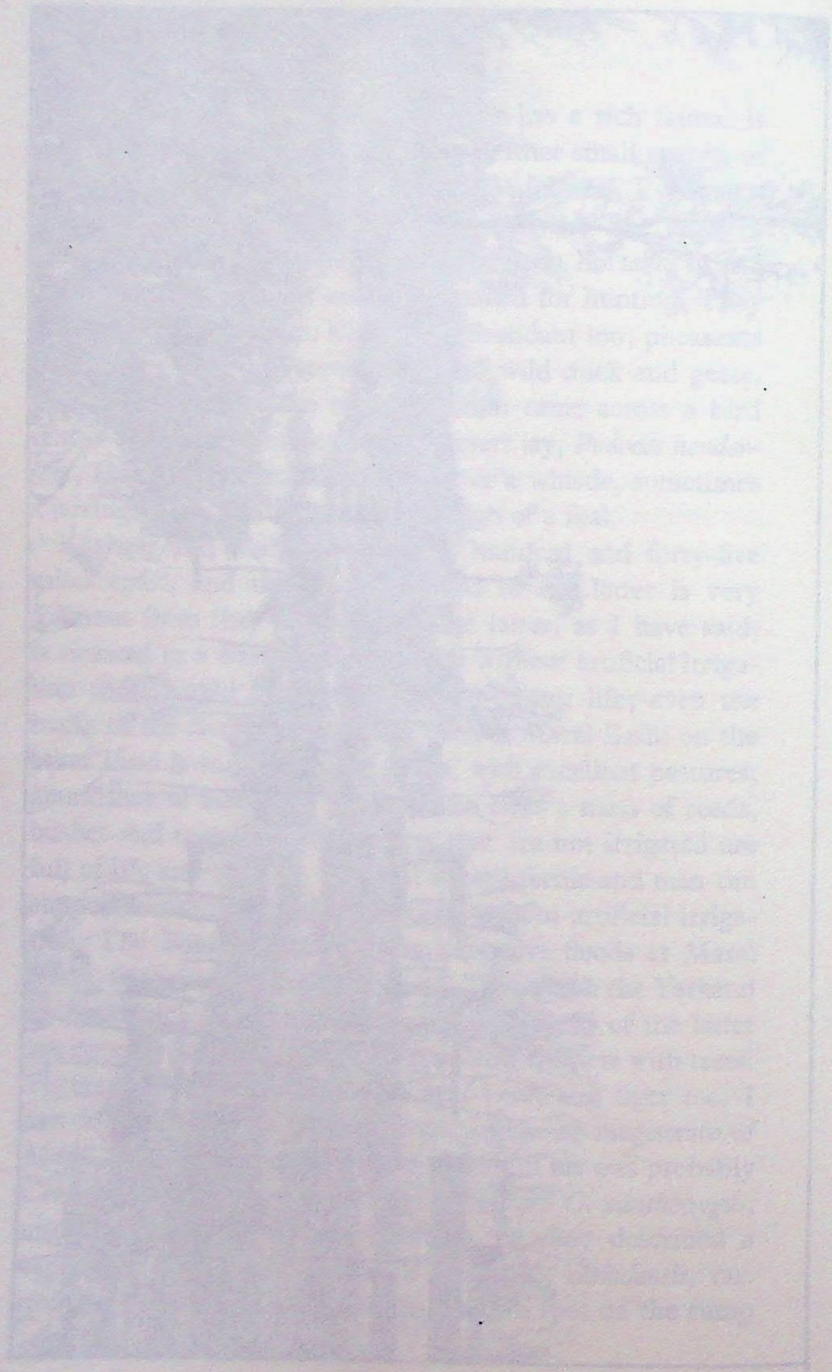

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and in the structure of the body and form of the antlers are nearer to the red deer of Europe than to the true maral or wapiti of Siberia, which occurs in Semirechie and Kuldja. The Chinese value the horns when in velvet just as highly as those of the true maral.

We spent several delightful days on the Yarkand Daryá shooting boar and pheasant, duck and hare. The pleasure in shooting in these jungles was for me all the greater, as I felt I had reached one of those half-mythical, longed-for spots over which I had dreamed and brooded in my student days, when I used to pore over the travels of N. M. Przewalski, the Yarkand Daryá, the Tarim and the fearful Takla Makan. Here was I actually myself in these very spots. We were on the northern border of this mysterious desert, which conceals buried under its sands the hidden remains of an ancient civilization.

Throughout all my excursions, thanks to the first-rate saddle-horse made available for me by Mr. Skrine, I never had any accidents, but I was not so lucky in my rides in the neighbourhood of the town. Once I narrowly escaped a fatal accident owing to over-confidence in an unfamiliar Kashgar horse. For the local animals are not very good. Better ones are imported from Afghanistan or Western Turkestan. One Sunday morning early in December I went out for a ride in the desert towards the mountains, accompanied by Mr. Harding and a couple of grooms from the Consulate. It was rather cold and I was warmly dressed in winter kit, with high warm boots on my feet and a fur jacket. This time I took a mount from a local horse-dealer who, like members of his kidney all the world over, never ceased singing the praises of his animal, although perfectly well aware that I had not the remotest intention of buying any horseflesh at all.

After riding through the cultivated belt we came to a big

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irrigation canal along the edge of the desert. Of immemorial age, it already had all the appearance of a natural river, and was deep, with vertical banks and a rapid current. It was crossed by a narrow bridge without any parapet of the usual native pattern, that is, a row of long, thick poles covered with brushwood with earth scattered on top. Under a man on foot, much less on horseback, a bridge like that quivers and shakes. Mr. Harding and the two grooms riding ahead dismounted and led their horses across. Being accustomed to our Turkestan horses, which do not make any fuss about going over bridges even worse than this, it never entered my head that my animal would not quietly follow the others, and so I did not dismount, but simply rode on. The current beneath was swift, sweeping along with it great blocks of ice, all covered with foam. When half-way over my brute began to show fear, stopped, and suddenly rearing on to its hind legs, crashed backwards into the water. To avoid being crushed by it, I slipped my feet out of the stirrups, flung myself from the saddle, and tried to dive as deep as I could. Luckily, there was plenty of water at this spot, but I could not get down to the bottom quickly, and felt the horse's body above me. I pushed away from it and had another attempt to dive clear, when I was caught by the undercurrent which dragged me down. My feet did not touch the bottom, though I sank owing to my heavy clothing. At last, it seemed an age, my feet touched the bottom and a moment later I found myself able to stand in my depth, up to the chest in water, too winded to be able to resist the current, which almost swept me off my feet into deeper water. I was gasping for breath and felt my strength giving way, when I heard someone call out, "Walk towards the bank!" Unfortunately, this was impossible, as there was deep water in front of me and I could not swim in my sodden, heavy clothes. Just at that moment one of the grooms,

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quickly unfastening his *chumbur*, or tethering-rope, from the bridle, stepped down into the water and flung me the end. I gripped the *chumbur*, and with its help made my way to the bridge, which they helped me to climb.

In the case of such an involuntary bath in winter it is of greatest importance not to get chilled, so I set off at once on foot to the nearest village, a distance of about a mile; and very heavy going I found it in my big boots and thick clothing, all full of water. But the walking kept me warm and in the village I took off my wet things and put on a dry native costume which my host very kindly lent me; I drank some steaming hot tea and then rode home. My involuntary icy bath had no ill consequences, although I took no further remedies. This, of course, was also largely due to the purity of the desert air, as in a thickly populated district such an adventure might have unpleasant consequences.

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PART II

MOVED ON!

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CHAPTER V

THE RIDE TO YARKAND

By the spring of 1924 it had become abundantly clear that the Pekin Government was hand and glove with the Soviets. Once these were recognized by the Chinese, the appearance of a Bolshevik Consulate in Kashgar was inevitable, with its usual crowd of myrmidons, agents of the O.G.P.U., agitators and spies. There was no doubt about it. My respite was over. I was moved on.

It would be too dangerous to remain in Chinese territory, as I should be liable to be assassinated, or at the least flung into a Chinese prison and conveyed secretly to the socialistic paradise. In the neighbouring Chinese province of Kulja or Ili, where a gang of Bolsheviks had made their appearance in the guise of a commercial mission, there had been several such cases. So my friends urged me to make for India, over the "culminating point of the earth," as the Karakoram is described by E. Réclus, the mountain crests of the Kuen Lun, and the Himalayas.

From boyhood the overland route to India had always exercised for me an irresistible attraction, especially through the mysterious regions of Central Asia. The historical road of the conquerors, through Persia or Afghanistan, has by now become banal. It can be done in a motor-car. But the route to the east of the Hindu Kush and Pamirs is still almost unknown. There life has never altered through the centuries.

In our old Russian folk poetry, in our fables and fairy tales, there are many allusions to the wanderings of our heroes and *bogatyrs*, to Ivan Tsarévich and other legendary figures, who make their way through "seven and twenty countries to thirty empires" in the quest of the mysterious

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Fire-Bird, *Zhar-Ptitsa*, which the Russian ballet has made familiar to English audiences.

Long before A.D. 860, the year of the foundation of the Russian state, the people of Russia were in contact with the inhabitants of Central Asia and through them with distant India. Russians even reached those remote regions from time to time, either as adventurers in search of booty or glory or as slaves or prisoners of war. Coming down to later dates, Peter the Great was very well informed about the gold-fields of Kashgaria, and even contemplated the conquest of "Greater and Lesser Bukhara as far as the river Erketi," that is, Yarkand Daryá. In 1713, a nobleman of Tobolsk, F. Trushnikoff, penetrated as far as Kuku Nor, and brought back to the Viceroy of Siberia a description of the gold deposits of Altyn Tagh, the Mountain of Gold, with samples of auriferous sand. In 1790–1, two Armenians, the brothers Anatasoff, reached Eastern Turkestan through India and Tibet, and related how in the district of Keria nuggets of gold are found at the foot of the mountains, with the precious stone *yui*, that is, jade or nephrite. In the eighteenth century, Philip Yefremoff made his way into India through Kashgar and the Karakoram, escaping from captivity in Bukhara.

I knew Central Asia from the Urals as far as Kashgar well enough. Prospecting and shooting, I had ridden all through the southern Urals and over the Kirghiz steppes. It was on horseback that I first arrived as a young man in Tashkent, my home for so many happy years, and I have ridden all over Turkestan, the Pamirs, Upper Bukhara, that is, Karategin and Darvaz, and also Semirechie. It was on horse-back that I had reached Kashgar, and now the same ancient means of transport, the backs of animals, would convey me over the loftiest and most difficult road in the world into Hindustan. In these days of steam and motor, the traveller sees but little of the country through which he

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is going. It is a very different story on horseback with a caravan, as they used to travel in days of old, and still, thank God, do travel in Eastern Turkestan. There is no better means of learning to know a country.

My delight therefore, can be imagined, at the thought of travelling by the overland route into India on horseback, and so make my way out into the civilized world again after four years sojourn in the Middle Ages, interesting, it is true, but gloomy and lonesome.

The great majority of people to-day, grown up in modern civilized countries, cannot conceive what is really involved in a journey on horseback with a caravan of pack-horses or camels. Many of them seem to think it is just "going for a ride," with the chance of a nice gallop or two. Few realize the complexity and responsibility of organizing and equipping a caravan expedition through the desert. If travellers sometimes cannot repress a smile at the naïve and simple questions which the ignorant natives of wild countries ask about lands more civilized, those put by educated Europeans about the backward and primitive lands are far more ridiculous, for they are people who ought to know better. A friend of mine, a professor, was unable to conceive what is meant by the word desert.

"But why don't they eat the grass?" he asked, when I had been explaining the need of carrying with us large quantities of food for the beasts.

Another acquaintance, who had never been outside Europe, after listening for a long time to my description of the difficulties of the road from Eastern Turkestan into India, of the fearful heights of the Karakoram, of the glaciers of Sasser-la and Kardong, of the peaks and abysses in the upper reaches of the Indus, seemed to have grasped the picture, and to have a good idea of what it all really meant, when he startled me with the question:

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Moved On!

"I suppose trains go very slowly in country like that, don't they?"

The possibility of travel by other than mechanical means no longer enters the head of the average twentieth-century European.

"Why didn't you go by car?" a girl once asked me. "You can surely drive one."

In organizing my caravan I was lucky to have the help of Mr. Skrine. Without the benefit of his knowledge and experience it would have been difficult for me to have undertaken the journey.

It was a bright sunny morning on August 24, 1924, when I left Kashgar, where, as in the old days in Russia, to welcome the coming and speed the parting guest is a serious undertaking. Among the Chinese it is strictly regulated by a rigid etiquette, depending upon the social or official position of the party. A few miles outside the city, Mr. and Mrs. Skrine arranged a *dastarkhan* for me by the roadside, and here I bade them farewell. A few days later they too were starting for India, but by the other route through the Pamirs and Gilgit.

I struck off, going through Yangi Shahr to the summer resort and shooting grounds of the Russian colony, where my compatriots were waiting to entertain me to lunch. Here, under the shade of a pergola of vines, from which great bunches of grapes were already hanging, I said good-bye to my friends.

I was leaving these good souls, survivors of the old régime, doomed to remain to the end in this remote, forsaken spot. For them there remained but one road open, as one of them said mournfully to me, the road to the cemetery. And now, as I write these lines, half of them have already passed along it.

Sent off with the heartiest of wishes by my friends, I

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rode down the hill on which their tents were pitched and for long through the marshy valley to the main road. Every now and then I turned my head to look behind me, and every time could distinguish a small group standing on the hilltop gazing after me. The mournful cry of millions of lapwings seemed in keeping with my mood. Huge flocks of starlings flew past with a rush and a whir to settle in the reeds, till these seemed a solid mass of birds. A few kites were soaring overhead. I had a good gaze round at the country I was leaving.

I hurried to overtake the cart with my baggage and servant on the main road to Yarkand. I was riding the same black stallion that Mr. Skrine describes in his book, and very well he carried me the whole of that long and trying road to Srinagar. He was strong and sound in wind and limb, and in spite of the rough road and stones he stumbled only once on the whole journey. He had another virtue; he was not nervous, and did not shy at any sudden movement. Nervousness is a common vice among horses in Central Asia, and on the narrow mountain trails and cornices overhanging an abyss, a horse that will shy at the sudden flight of a bird, or if a hare jumps up, is a great danger. There are really few good horses in Kashgaria, except some of good breed imported from Ferghaná and Afghanistan, of the race known as Karabair, noted for their beauty, speed, and endurance, or of the Kirghiz breed from Semirechie, often ugly, but quiet, steady, well behaved, and of inexhaustible energy, capable of going all day long, as useful in the mountains as in the plains. A local race that is widely spread in Kashgaria is the horse of Karashar, bred near the city of that name in the eastern half of the country. These are of strange appearance; the head is straight and flat, the neck short and stiff, the mane erect and bristly, like that of a knight of the chessboard or the figures on ancient Greek

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bas-reliefs and friezes; the barrel-shaped body is sometimes disproportionately big, but the legs are short and weak and always give trouble. The Sarts like these horses because they are easy to handle and ride, but they often let their rider down and in this respect are dangerous. It was to one of these Karashars that I owed the accident, soon after my arrival in Kashgar, which so nearly left me a cripple, and I know of many other serious accidents with them, hardly surprising in view of their ill-proportioned build.

A remarkable and interesting point in connection with the Karashar horse is its resemblance to Przewalski's famous wild horse. Apart from the colour, which is very varied, and the size, the resemblance is very close. The form of the head and neck are particularly alike. Moreover, these wild horses live in the same parts of Djungaria where the Karashar horse is bred. If the latter is not directly derived from the wild species, it has undoubtedly a strong infusion of its blood.

On the far side of the river Gez, which I crossed by a narrow bridge, the country alters in appearance owing to the *barkhans*, or dunes of shifting sands. The river, which here is fairly broad and deep, rises in the Pamirs, flows out of the lesser Kara Kul, or Black Lake, very cold, clear, and transparent, having deposited its sediment in the lake. Other rivers which carry away the waters of melting glaciers are always sandy and muddy.

Soon after sunset I reached the village of Yapchen, where I stopped in a fairly clean caravanserai. The next morning I was up early and on the road by six. There was no traffic, but Sart women were busily sweeping the streets with brooms just as they sweep the floors of houses in Europe. The little piles of rubbish were collected into bags and taken away on their shoulders. The diligent cleaning up was not inspired by any notion of cleanliness, which is foreign to the Sart

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character. The motive was very different. The soil here is sandy and poor, while street sweepings, rich in animal matter, afford excellent manure for their fields. For this same reason they have here public latrines, a luxury unknown in Russian Turkestan.

After leaving this village the road runs for some time through cultivated land, through an avenue of willows, poplars, and Babylonian willows, *Eleagnus hortensis*, intergrown with briars, with *Clematis orientalis*, and some kind of bindweed with white flowers, thickly matted on the trees. By the sides of the road were fields and meadows, big areas covered with rush, with here and there clusters of dark green tamarisk with bunches of pink flowers and clumps of high *chiy*, *Lasiagrostis splendens*, the Central Asiatic wire-grass with its feathery crests.

While waiting, I amused myself by watching a number of Sart women going and coming out of the doors of a *yamen* or office near by. They were clothed in Chinese fashion, for the Chinese dress their Sart lady friends in their own national costume. Two of them, no longer young, were squabbling dreadfully. In Yangi Hissar the women do not veil their faces.

I had finished drinking tea and eaten a melon by the time the cart arrived, and then went to the caravanserai. On this road they are fairly well kept and tolerably clean. One can always hire a separate room and make oneself comfortable, but the quantity of flies here forbade repose. Owing to the heat I had lost all appetite, and ate only fruit. In the evening rain came and lasted all night, which cooled the air considerably.

The morning was damp and foggy after the wet. Riding out of the town, we passed an old graveyard with great white *mazary* or Sart shrines, up a sandy hill and down on the far side to a pleasant spot by the river. On the right was a

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row of hills, on the left there ran an *aryk* or irrigation canal.

Presently I saw a horseman riding towards me. The horse, a fine animal, was well turned out and covered with rugs. The rider was wearing a white turban with a cockade and aigrette and a handsome embroidered jacket. This elegant figure called to my mind the Indian Guest in the opera *Sadko*. When level with me he raised his hand to his brow in salutation and said:

"Salaam!"

This "Indian Guest" was very different from the dirty, sombrely-clad Hindus who swarm in the bazaars of Eastern and Western Turkestan. Whence had he dropped, this first representative of that picturesque and distant India as we are accustomed to imagine?

We often met caravans of well-groomed donkeys laden with wool in new, big, white sacks. I rode up a little elevation and on the far slope came upon a *kurgancha* or farm, where a spring of cold water irrigates a small oasis and cluster of willows. Beyond extended a valley with the soil heavily impregnated with salt, covered with reeds, rush and sedge. I rode through the village of Kilpin and stopped in the next one, a small place called Topa, the Dusty, to rest awhile. It was fifteen miles from Yangi Hissar. The sky cleared and the sun grew hot. While I was eating my usual melon, a Sart and his wife came up to ask me for medicine for the most varied ailments. The Sarts, and especially the Kirghiz, are great lovers of medicine, and in their simplicity look upon every European as a doctor who at all times and in all places and in all circumstances, even when snipe-shooting in the marshes, carries upon his person the entire stock of a pharmaceutical chemist.

From there to the village of Kizil Gumbez, the Red Tomb, a distance of about twelve miles, the road is through what

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may be termed an aeolian landscape, so characteristic of Central Asia. The barren, sandy valley, under the influence of the prevailing winds, forms endless tiers of hummocks, so that in places the road seems to run beneath the level of the valley as though in a trench, while here and there the great roots of an occasional tree are exposed for a considerable height, producing a curious effect as though the tree were seen in section.

At the entry into the village of Kizil Gumbez there is an extensive cemetery and a large square *khauz* or pond, formed by four copious springs, the water of which is used for irrigation. On one side is the tomb of some saint, on the other a large *supé*, at the four corners of which four huge poplars rear their heads. I spent the night here and rode on early next morning to the next big village, Kök Yar, the Green Hollow. This was a thirty-mile ride through a sandy desert valley, cut here and there by dry stream beds covered with pebbles. Along the road it is not unusual to come across *ravats*, that is, shelters for travellers constructed of burnt brick in some former age, nowadays neglected and tumbling into ruin. Occasionally they are inhabited by some poverty-stricken Sart family. In one such *ravat*, situate about half-way and in a somewhat better condition than most of them, I stopped to rest. Within was a good well, and the whole place was clean; two young willows were growing here, evidently carefully tended in this hot and arid desert.

After a short rest and refreshing myself on a juicy water-melon I rode on. The sun was already hot, but there was a nice breeze; there were no flies to torment us, and it was pleasant going in spite of the monotony of the scenery. Of animal life there was little in this desert. All I saw was a single lizard and on the walls of a tumbledown *ravat* a handsome desert jay, *Podoces biddulphi*, Hume. Riding through

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this monotonous, dry, dusty desert must be very trying on a hot day.

In the afternoon I reached Kök Yar the beginning of the green oasis of Yarkand. By the entry into the village there are big clumps of tamarisk, even trees, and a splendid avenue of poplars leads into the extensive bazaar, through which I rode, stopping at a large, well-kept caravanserai, a meeting-place for numerous Chinese merchants bound for Kashgar. While waiting for my cart, I watched the arrival of a Chinaman with a young wife. They had already been on the road a long time, for they had come from somewhere in the interior of China, and their cart had been turned into a comfortable little house on wheels. On arrival, as soon as they had taken up their places, the lady set to work at once to wash her linen and hang it up to dry. She then washed herself somewhere, and crept back into her caravan, whence she presently emerged transfigured. She was wearing a black silk shirt, and her blue-black hair, lustrous like a raven's wing, was coquettishly combed and decorated with artificial flowers, her little face heavily rouged in the Chinese fashion. Thus dressed up in her Sunday best, this Chinese lady accompanied her husband to their room to drink tea. It was clear that neither whole months of fatiguing travel, nor the heat, nor the sandstorms of the deserts, nor yet the depressing monotony of life on the road could suppress the instinct of coquetry.

The wind stiffened into a storm; the air was filled with dust; the sky grew red, and great columns of sandy clouds of sand rose. It was impossible to stay out of doors, so I shut myself in my room for refuge; it was quite dark, although only three in the afternoon. This was the Khotan wind, bringing sandy dust from the desert. Woe to the caravan or wayfarer whom this wind catches in the desert of Takla Makan. Presently there was the crash of thunder, followed

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by rain, which in the evening became a real downpour. Heaven was favouring me. During the heat, the rains freshen the air, water the roads, and made my journey easy and pleasant, saving me from the burning heat, the dust, and the unendurable flies, which especially in the villages kill all interest and pleasure for the traveller.

After the storm, the air was distinctly cooler, and it was a wonderful morning when I rode out on my way. The sun was still veiled by a thin haze of cloud, while the green of the trees and gardens was more brilliant than ever.

After leaving the village, the road goes a long way through an avenue of huge willows. On the sides there stretched fields of *djugara* or sorgo, durra, *Sorghum*, *Cicer arietinum*, chick pea, maize, and flax, which is widely cultivated in Turkestan for the sake of its edible oil; now it was in full bloom and the bright blue flowers adorned the fields on either side. The soil of the Yarkand oasis is very fertile, well watered and supplies the inhabitants generously. Life is easy for them, so that they are easy-going and not very enterprising. In Kashgar, on the other hand, the poverty of the soil has compelled the inhabitants to develop their local industries, such as hides and *matá*, a coarse textile made from cotton. The men of Kashgar are enterprising merchants, and tens of thousands of them used to travel to Russian Turkestan every year to earn money. Similar conditions have made the men of Khotan into skilful artisans, leather-workers, makers of felt, and other craftsmen, to cultivate silk and make an excellent paper, and to improve their local breed of goats and sheep. But the men of Yarkand, whose fertile soil yields an abundant harvest of all that he may require, together with a generous water supply, does not bother his head about anything else than his fields and his gardens.

Sandy areas are frequent by the wayside, where the

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barkhans are already trespassing, but they are covered with grass which holds them under control. In fact, the whole countryside is green and vegetation is rich. For about ten miles or so the road runs through a valley covered with wild vegetation; the dominant form is the camel grass, *Alhagi camelorum*, a kind of pea, *Sophora alopecuroides*, and liquorice, *Glycorrhiza glandulifera*, while on the sandy hummocks there grows the *khazarasp*, *Peganum harmala*, a dark green plant with thin little leaves and yellow flowers, which is important for the natives as an intoxicating drug and charm against evil spirits and spells. Clumps of tamarisk grow between the dunes, on the banks of small but picturesque ponds, while here and there are the bright emerald patches of rice-fields.

By the wayside, in the shade of a small tree on the flanks of a sand dune, sat a man selling melons. I dismounted, made the horse fast to the tree, bought one, and lay on the slightly moist sand, glad to rest awhile and refresh myself. The melon was excellent, sweet, juicy, and fragrant. It was pleasant to sit on the yielding sand and stretch my legs after three hours in the saddle.

A caravan of mules came by; then some young women, probably from a neighbouring farm, their faces unveiled, their hair adorned with red and blue flowers. Starlings were chattering in the trees and golden-yellow orioles, *Oriolus kundoo*, flashed by. All this scene, and Nature herself, breathed the atmosphere of calm and peace. There was no haste nor bustle, no hurry. The East cannot endure haste. It loves repose and calm, grandeur and dignity.

I fared on, riding for some time through hamlets of but a few houses sheltering in the thick shade of lofty poplars and willows. An elderly Sart came out from one, signed to me to stop, and came up to the horse:

"*Selam aleikum!*" he greeted me.

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"*Aleikum selam!*" I replied. "What can I do for you?"

"*Taxir*," he began. "My wife is already in travail with childbirth these three days. Pray come and ease her and give her medicine."

"But I am not a doctor," I replied, "and have no medicine."

"Not so. I see thou art a doctor and hast medicine," he insisted. "I know thou art from the Swedish Mission, and will help an unhappy woman."

I assured him that there was nothing I could do, and that I had no medicine with me, but he insisted obstinately and finally grew angry and began to shout at me.

Poor man, I understood perfectly well. He saw in me, of course, a European, and therefore one of those missionaries, who lavish their help upon the native population. There was nothing I could do, and I did not want to quarrel with the old man, so I spurred my horse. To my astonishment, the fellow seized the bridle and glared at me in anger. I was sorry for him, and rather amused, but annoyed at his boldness. To shake him off I had to raise my whip, when he let go.

A little farther on, the road drops to a deep river full of water, flowing between steep banks, covered with dense vegetation, and then passes along the left bank in a shady avenue. On the left there is a big open lake, with quantities of wild duck. Then the road turns abruptly to the right, crosses the river by a couple of bridges at a point where it is divided into two arms by an eyot, and follows through dense plantations. To the left, high sand dunes approach the trail, reddish after the recent rain, but even on them there was a green tinge. The district was very sandy and evidently the whole place was a desert before irrigation converted it into a smiling garden. There is not even a vague tradition to tell us when this was done.

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Moved On!

Properly speaking, the river mentioned is not a river at all, although it looks like one. Really it is an *aryk*, an irrigation canal, dug in some long-forgotten age by long-forgotten hands, but now, flowing through the millennia, it has deepened and widened its channel and taken on the outward appearance of a river. Only at its "head," above Yarkand, where it taps the river Tiznaf, is revealed the artificial origin of this supply of water which gives life unto the desert. Destroy the "head" of this canal, and the others in the Yarkand oasis, and the whole country will rapidly dry up, all vegetation will wilt and wither, and the sand, now bound by the roots, will be released and begin to move at the caprice of the winds and overwhelm the remnants of culture and all the flourishing wealth and abundance of the fruits of the earth. The land will resolve itself into an indistinguishable part of the great lifeless desert of Takla Makan.

Nowhere in Central Asia is the complete dependence of man upon his canals so clearly seen as here, in this rich and prosperous oasis of Yarkand. As in the west of Europe the enterprising and laborious Hollanders have won their land inch by inch from the sea itself, so here in the depths of the vast continent of Asia have the Uigur of old, or perhaps the mysterious *Homo alpinus*, conquered his fertile soil from the engulfing ocean of sand called Takla Makan.

A few miles farther the trail strikes another river, very broad, recalling those of Central Russia, the banks covered with high trees and shrubs, which showed signs of recent flooding. This too is not a real river, but a very ancient canal dug by the hand of man. About a mile farther, where the banks approach each other, there is a bridge. Along green fields, orchards, gardens, and plantations, the road imperceptibly approaches the lofty city walls of Yarkand, almost concealed by great, shady trees, the white and Lombardy poplars, oriental plane, the pagoda tree,

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Sophora japonica, *Zizyphus vulgaris*, and others. Yarkand, the City of the Cliff, is known by the Chinese as So Che. This is characteristic, for as a rule Chinese names of places have nothing in common with the native ones, which are often extremely ancient. They are frequently changed, too, without apparent reason. The Chinese call Kashgar Shu Fu; Urumchi, the capital of the province of Sin Kiang, they now call Ti Hwa, but up to 1921 it bore the name Ti Wfu, while for postal and telegraph purposes it is officially known as Did Ha. This accounts for the great difficulty in understanding and trusting Chinese historical records and the descriptions of Chinese geographers and travellers, as it is so very difficult to identify the place, city, or people referred to.

Yarkand consists of two parts, the New City, surrounded by a high wall, inhabited chiefly by Chinese officials, merchants, and so on, and the Old City, a little distance away, with its walls in a deplorable condition, built like the other, only of clay. The two cities are connected by a broad street of shops and warehouses. On an eminence between them stands the Swedish Mission. The heads of the Mission, Dr. Nyström and Mrs. Nyström, had invited me to stop with them when passing through Yarkand, and I had a kind and warm welcome when I rode up to the door. I stayed there a week waiting for pack-horses and attendants for my caravan, getting ready tents and similar preparations. It was a restful time, and I have a lively memory of the kindness, peace, and repose.

The Mission premises are well laid out and include a number of substantial buildings, such as a large church, hospital, farm and farm buildings, workshops and so on. While I was there they were building a guest-house for native visitors from distant towns, in the native style and very comfortable. A large orphanage was being built, too, for native children. On every side was visible the activity and

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energy of unselfish people who devoted their strength and substance to the benefit of their neighbours, utterly foreign to them as they were in tongue, faith, and mentality. The window of my bright and large room opened on to the beautiful shady garden, where I used to sit and read in my spare moments. It was a mass of flowers and full of rare and interesting trees; there was a *Gleditchia*, *G. tracanthoides*, with immense needles, white acacias, and some huge and very beautiful willows, their trunks covered with bright-green bark, *Salix microstachys* probably, with long, slender branches with bunches of long, narrow leaves. The tree has an original sort of crisp appearance. Great trailing vines dangled from a trellis and peach-trees were covered with bright red fruit. Sart women in their Sunday best used to come and enjoy this wonderful garden.

The next day in this garden we held a regular council of war, with Dr. Nyström in the chair; there were present almost all the members of the Mission, and also Gulam Khan, the British Ak-Sakal, literally Greybeard, actually the designation of the chief of the British subjects; there were seven local Sarts, *caravanbashi*, or caravan-leaders, and so on, all experienced men. One of them, a great, tall, strongly built fellow with a flowing beard reminded me of the carvings of ancient Assyrians. We discussed the state of the road, the proposals of the *caravanbash*, the choice of route, and such questions as must be thrashed out before starting on so long and arduous a journey. There are three routes to the tableland of the Karakoram, by Sanju, Kilian, and Kök Yar (or Kugiar). The last is the best, but is not always available. Fortunately, according to the information, it was now open. Departure was settled for the following Friday, so I had a clear week in which to explore the city and neighbourhood of Yarkand.

On Sunday there was service in the church. Many natives

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attended, especially women, in their best clothes with flowers in their hair. Besides Christian converts, sometimes Mahommedans come, to hear the singing and listen with great interest to the sermon in their own language, preached by a native Christian. Then we paid a visit to the orphanage, where forty-four native children of various ages were being looked after by the lady member of the Mission. The little boys and girls looked splendid, full of life, their rosy cheeks glowing with health. They were all the very poorest street urchins, beggars, waifs, and foundlings. Whatever success may attend the spread of the Gospel among adult natives, there can be no question about this wonderful rescue from starvation, disease, and death of these poor abandoned mites, in truth a work pleasing unto God, reflecting the greatest honour upon the Swedish Mission.

It is above all this splendid charitable work which excites the hatred of the fanatical mullahs and preachers of Islam. More than once they have come to lay complaints before the Tao In.

"The Swedes take our children and convert them to Christianity, which is contrary to the Shariat."

"Then why do you not found an orphanage yourself for your own abandoned children, and bring them up according to the Shariat?" was the reply of the Chinaman.

But the charity of the Moslems of Kashgar is usually limited to the giving of a farthing or so, or of a crust of bread.

Sart children are by nature gentle and obedient; they submit to discipline and are generally well behaved. When I was in Pishpek I saw two homes for orphans, one for Mahommedan children, the other for Russians. In both the mistresses were Russian women. The children of the first were a model of obedience and good behaviour. I often used to stand and enjoy watching them at play, and their mistresses

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could not find words enough to sing their praises. But the Russian home was nothing more or less than a public nuisance. Thieving raids into the neighbours' houses were the least evil done by these budding representatives of active socialism. The unfortunate matron and teachers of this home lived in a state of misery.

If it were not for the tolerance of the Chinese authorities in Kashgaria, the missionaries' activity would hardly be possible owing to the fanaticism of the population and open hostility of the mullahs. The cause of the failure of Christian propaganda in Moslem countries and the great spread of Islam among primitive peoples lies in the lofty spiritual truths of Christian teaching, which are quite incomprehensible to the intelligence of a Sart, for instance, whose ideas are purely materialistic. He can appreciate only material benefits and the good things of life. Spiritual ideas are totally unfamiliar and foreign to his mind: he has not, in fact, the remotest conception of them. Islam on the other hand is downright and materialistic. Here on earth it demands from its True Believers the fulfilment of clear, straightforward duties which are perfectly comprehensible to their understanding. The reward promised them in a future life is not only easy to understand as well as desirable in itself, but already actually to a certain extent familiar to them. One of the obstacles in the way of the spread of Christianity is the fact, not generally realized in Europe, that Moslems recognize the Old Testament and the teaching of Christ, though the latter is, to them of course, only a prophet. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophet Enoch, Jesus Christ, the Mother of God, these are all saints in the eyes of the Mahommedan. As a matter of fact Mahomet decreed death for blasphemy against Jesus Christ and the Virgin. Consequently, Moslems, with only a superficial knowledge of Christian teaching, look upon Christians as men obdurate

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in old beliefs, considering themselves more enlightened and advanced in their faith.

Last but not least, the greatest obstacle to the conversion of eastern people is their devotion to polygamy. Mahommedan women laugh at Europeans, while the men consider us hypocrites.

"You do the same things as we," they say, "only in secret; but we openly, as the Law permits."

The East remains the East in spite of the reforming zeal of modern dictators. Even the Jews of the East, who are numerous in Persia and Bukhara, and probably represent the purest Hebrew blood of the Sephardim, who differ in no way from their western co-religionists in creed, jealously conserve the custom of polygamy.

From the very beginning of the conquest of Western Turkestan, the Russian Government respected the fanaticism of the native population and forbade all missionary activities. General Kaufmann, organizer of the administration of the province, laid down as a fundamental principle, "No missionaries and no gendarmes," meaning by the latter special political police. This wise measure contributed very largely to the pacification of the country and establishment of confidence of the native population in the Russian Government. Seeing their religion, manner of life and customs untouched, and realizing that no danger threatened them, the native population quickly submitted to the Russian authority and was pacified. H. W. Bellew, one of the members of the Forsyth Expedition to Chinese Turkestan, spoke in terms of the greatest respect of Russia's civilizing influence in Central Asia and of the beneficent result of her conquests upon the peoples subject to the caprice of Asiatic despots.

In Yarkand there is a curious instance of Moslem fanaticism. In the streets and bazaars there are numerous wooden boxes, like letter-boxes. These are for the reception of

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waste paper, for paper is the medium for the writing of the word of God, and so must not be thrown heedlessly away or used for any unclean purpose. The German archaeologist, Dr. von Le Coq, relates how some Hindus in Yarkand, hearing that his boxes contained old manuscripts, asked his permission to conduct a service over them. They sprinkled the boxes with water, placed flowers on them, and walked round in a circle, solemnly chanting their sacred hymns.

The attitude of the Chinese towards the printed word is of course very different. In the year 212 B.C. the Emperor Shih Hwang, first of the Tsin dynasty, issued the most radical order that all books except calendars and those dealing with magic be burnt, with the penalty of death for disobedience. It is recorded that four hundred and sixty learned men were buried alive for refusing to obey the Imperial command. Even the works of Confucius perished. Fortunately, after his death a few concealed copies were discovered. The Emperor Seang of Wei, who died in 295 B.C., had ordered his entire library to be buried with him. His tomb was discovered accidentally five hundred and seventy-four years afterwards, which rendered possible the restoration of Chinese literature and philosophy. In our own time, in 1900, the Boxers ordered libraries to be burnt.

The Chinese section of the Yarkand bazaar is distinguished from the Sart portion by its greater cleanliness, by the distinction of the shop buildings, with decorated façades and fantastic carvings. In the native bazaar it is surprising how many women there are engaged in trade and selling in the shops. Here women seldom veil their faces; they enjoy greater freedom than in Kashgar, where the seclusion is said to have been introduced only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, under the influence of zealots from Ferghaná.

Here one sees many men and women suffering from

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goitre, often of huge size. It is now generally known that this disease is due to the imperfect functioning of the thyroid gland owing to deficiency of iodine, and in this connection it is a remarkable thing that the Chinese, by purely empirical methods, have discovered a preventative; that is a kind of seaweed which has a high iodine content and is a very important vegetable among the Chinese. In spite of the immense distance, they have it sent dried to Kashgar. Possibly there is a connection between the commonness of goitre and the immense development of bust among the women of Yarkand, which is often quite disproportionate to the height and figure. Goitre does not appear to be accompanied by cretinism here as it is in Switzerland. The natives attribute it to drinking unboiled water. An acquaintance of mine, an engineer who worked for many years in Eastern Bukhara, used to tell me about a village in the valley of Karategin which draws its water-supply from a spring famous for its power of developing the female bust. This spring had a great reputation among the fair sex of Bukhara, and was visited by numbers of women who came immense distances to improve their figures. My friend was enthusiastic about the idea of developing the place into a health resort for Europeans. Who knows, but for the Great War and the Russian revolution, he might have been able to carry his idea into execution. But even then modern fashion would have ruined him, unless, however, women had reverted to older and better ideas. *Donna è mobile!*

On September 5th I rode out of Yarkand on my long journey, accompanied by the prayers and best wishes of my good friends. My caravan consisted of nine pack-horses, a mule, five *kerekeshi* or drivers, and the *caravanbash* or master of the caravan. My servant came from Kashmir, Salamat Khan, who had settled in Yarkand and married the daughter of a learned old mullah, who gave lessons in Turki

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in the Mission. His wife had presented him with a son on the evening before, so he was delighted, taking it as a special mark of favour on the part of Allah and a good omen. In the village of Kök Yar five camels would join us, to carry fodder for the horses.

"The camels will hardly be able to go beyond Ak Tagh," said the *caravanbash* to me, "though if the weather is good perhaps they will get as far as Sasser-la pass, but they cannot go through it."

"Then how shall we get through?" I asked.

"*Khudai khalasa.* If God wills, the Bhoti will come to us, the pagan Tibetan, with their *kutas*, yaks, and we shall get through over the ice of Mus Tau on them."

"That is the worst bit of the whole road," he went on, "from Ak Tagh to Sasser-la; that is where both men and beasts have *tutek*, where they gasp and the horses fall sick and die by the wayside, and men can hardly move one leg in front of the other; many have bleeding from the nose and throat; men often cannot break up their food and may die of hunger."

"What do you do to prevent *tutek*?" I asked him.

"It is a very good thing to eat apricot stones. We will get a supply of them in Karghalyk. The difficult piece of road, where there is *tutek*, will take six or seven days, and after that it will be easier," he said.

"But what do you do when the horses have *tutek*?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"*Ikhtiar khudai, taxyr!*" he answered. "It is the will of God. There is nothing to do. The only thing is to go as slowly as possible, and you must not give them barley."

Such was the cheerful outlook for the road over the table-land of the Karakoram to the source of the Indus and the chain of the Himalayas.

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The Ride to Yarkand

On leaving the ancient city of Yarkand the road goes between paddy fields bordered with poplars. Over a field covered with water there fluttered hundreds of white gulls and migratory waders. About five miles along the road we came upon our kind Swedish friends, who were waiting to give us *dastarkhan*, in the Kashgar fashion, to speed me on the road with tea, excellent Russian broth, a magnificent *palau*, and wonderful coffee.

Dr. Nyström preached a farewell sermon in Turki, calling for the blessing of the Almighty upon our enterprise. The *kerekeshi* and the *caravanbash* listened attentively to his words.

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CHAPTER VI

INTO THE KUEN LUN

THE road leads through cultivated land, always in the shade of trees, through fields of rice, sorgo, and cotton, over two small arms of the river Yarkand by bridges and, about four miles farther on, comes to a broad channel of the same river, flowing here in many branches over a gravelly bottom a couple of miles wide. The river here has the characteristic appearance of a mountain stream that brings down a mass of gravel and spreads in wide floods over the flat lands, changing its bed and branches every year. The rivers of Turkestan are of the same type, and so is the Po in Italy. Numerous bush-covered islets studded the stream. Some of the branches were forded; others we crossed by rafts, like great big flat-bottomed barges with raised sides, on to which the horses jumped very cleverly, quite accustomed to the work. The men working the barge somehow or other succeeded in getting on board a heavily laden cart with immense seven-foot wheels.

The Yarkand Daryá in its upper reaches is called Raskem Daryá, corrupted from Ris-Kan, much ore, from an old copper mine on its banks. Sometimes the natives call it the Tiznaf, corrupted from Tyz-nap, which is really the name of one of its tributaries flowing in from the Yangi Davan, better known under the name Khalistan Daryá.

A few miles from the river we came to the village of Posgam, where we spent the night in the caravanserai which is managed by a syndicate of Mahommedan women. Such a thing would have been quite impossible in Russian Turkestan, but in fact, the farther away you are from Ferghaná, the very seat of Mahommedan felicity, the greater is the

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freedom enjoyed by the fair sex. Here they engage in trade on equal terms with the men. The faces of most of the women of this district are rather of the so-called Aryan, or rather, Iranian type. Their figures, too, are of classical form.

At half-past seven the next morning we were on the road again, all the time through fertile fields, smiling orchards, and shady avenues. Eight miles farther I stopped to rest a little in a small village with an important-looking "bazaar-street," bearing the odd name of Yak Shambé, which means the day equivalent to our Sunday, bazaar day in this village. A couple of miles beyond this I was astonished to come upon a broad strip of red material stretched across the road from one poplar to another and a little farther on, between two trees by the side of the road, a variegated and elegant tent, in which stood two Chinamen, one of whom was dressed in the European manner, while a party of soldiers stood round with guns, natives, and horses. It appeared that they were meeting a new *amban* or magistrate on his way to Khotan. A little farther on I overtook the baggage train of this celestial dignitary and his household staff. A row of huge wagons was packed with all sorts of things. On top of a great pile of furniture on one of them proudly sat a pug. In others I caught a glimpse of the faces of women, young and old, and of children. Some of the carts were drawn by mules. Great copper bells hung from their necks, tinkling as they moved. Looking at this peculiar cavalcade, I rode slowly past the string of carts.

Suddenly a bugle rang out. Instantly the whole procession stopped, and the Sarts dismounted. Five men on horseback appeared. Two were standard-bearers, one the bugler and, behind them, on a small black horse, squatting on the top of a great white pillow, a hoary, bent, opium-sodden old Chinaman. This was the new *amban* of the province of Khotan. On coming up to his cart, he dismounted,

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climbed into the wagon, and stretched himself on his bed.

The road follows a marshy valley and then by a long bridge across to the other bank of the river Tiznaf, where I overtook some Chinese mounted men, the convoy or advance guard of the new *amban.*

"Where are you off to, Comrade?" called one of them to me in pidgin-Russian. He had spent some time in the land of the Soviets and picked up a little of our language, including the Communist formula of greeting.

On the far bank the character of the countryside changed abruptly. Once again we found high trees and green fields with various crops, but the soil was sandier and in places the road was covered with deep sand. I stopped to rest and drink tea in a hamlet eight miles short of Karghalyk. The road goes on, through shady avenues, among fields and gardens, and about half-way there I found another broad strip of red material stretched across the road with an inscription in Chinese; there were variegated tents, soldiers, musicians, and the prefect of the Karghalyk district with all his staff and the townspeople, the supers, to welcome the new *amban.*

Karghalyk, from *kargha,* a rook, Rookwood in fact, has no walls, but has gates, where yet another ceremonial greeting awaited the *amban.* Here the road forks, one branch going to Tibet and India to the south, the other to the east to Khotan and farther into China proper, to Pekin.

At the gates there was a mounted guard waiting for the *amban.* Seeing me, the bugler gave me a musical greeting, either to welcome me as a European, or because he took me for some member of the *amban's* staff. We rode through interminable narrow streets, through the dingy bazaar, until we came out at the southern edge of the town, where we turned into a spacious and very comfortable caravan-

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serai. It was surprisingly clean. The animals were all stabled in a separate yard, while accommodation for travellers was in another, with places for their baggage and merchandise. This, too, was managed by women, who are perfectly free and independent here and have the controlling voice.

There were some native Christians in the caravanserai, dressed in exactly the same way as their Moslem kinsmen; the women sometimes even veiling their faces. This is a good custom, but facilitates backsliding.

I did not stay there long, for the Ak-Sakal arrived and invited me to stop in his place. I left the pack animals and men, took my servant and groom, and once more rode right through the town to the northern side, where, at the very boundary, I found his fine house in a delightful garden. It was not big, but full of fruit, including quantities of vines. I was surprised to see the bunches of grapes tied up in paper bags to protect them against the attacks of the wasps which swarm here. This was gratifying, as it was my own contribution to the country. I had introduced it in the gardens of the British Consulate in Kashgar in 1921 with great success, and I was glad to see it had already spread so far as Karghalyk.

There was another innovation of mine in the realm of horticulture which I was gratified and surprised to find had preceded me into Kashgaria. In my home in Tashkent I had given a great deal of attention to the cultivation of fruit, among others, of plums. In general, all sorts of plums grow very well in Russian Turkestan, but their cultivation has decayed and been abandoned, as the fruit is attacked by a small moth, *Cydia funebrana*. After numerous and patient experiments I succeeded in finding a Japanese plum, *Prunus simoni*, which is immune. The plum itself is not very good and does not yield a particularly good fruit in European gardens, but in our soil, under the sun of Turkestan, it gave

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a first-rate, great, luscious plum with a slight fragrance of pineapple, and, what is very important, stands long journeys, and so is an excellent fruit for export. It was such a success that it was taken up by my neighbours. The Sarts took to it also, calling it *ali pomidur*, from *ali*, plum, in Turki, and *pomme d'amour*, from its resemblance to a tomato. Once when I was out on a picnic in the garden of Mir Akhmat, Ak-Sakal in Kashgar, I was delighted to see the familiar reddish-golden fruit of my old friend the Japanese plum.

"Where did you get those trees?" I asked my host.

"From Andijan, *taxir*," he replied. "A friend of mine gave them to me; they came out of his garden. It is a rare kind, *djida yakshi*, very good indeed," he said, loudly singing its praises.

So it was that this fruit of my labours in horticulture preceded me into this remote and highly conservative country.

Karghalyk deserves its name. When I was there the lofty trees in the evenings were crowded with rooks and the air full of their incessant cawing. I used to listen to the gentle cooing of the doves in the garden; there were two kinds, our Turkestan species being there as well as the Kashgar dove. The soil was fertile, maize growing to the height of the head of a man on horseback, and *brinjolls*, the so-called egg-plant, our *bakladjan*, reaches a height of 3 feet; there were immense melons 2½ feet in length, but not so sweet and good as in Kashgar; the peach-trees were so laden with fruit that the branches were breaking.

When I was strolling about near the garden two little donkeys came and made my acquaintance. They were very pretty and well groomed and wanted to be fussed; they insisted on my stroking their heads and patting their necks, poking their warm muzzles into my hands for some titbits, and followed me right up to the door. From childhood I have been fond of these clever and affectionate animals,

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which become very attached to man, faithful and hard-working. It is quite incomprehensible why ungrateful mankind has given them a reputation for stupidity and obstinacy. What is often mistaken for stubbornness in the ass is often nothing more nor less than a better comprehension of the circumstances, which the master often totally fails to understand. They are every bit as intelligent as horses and superior in devotion and industry. Their chief drawbacks are their rather comical external appearance, long ears, and unfortunate voice. Perhaps it is for this that the lord of the earth refuses to make a friend of the ass, and rewards his industry only with the stick.

In Kashgaria the ass is the chief beast of burden. Without them the country would soon be the victim of ruin and famine. But when has man shown gratitude to his benefactor? Poets and writers of fables sing the praises of the ant as a model of industry, though he is really a rapacious robber, while the termite or so-called white ant is regarded as the very emblem of ruin and destruction, yet in the tropics he is the patient builder of castles, providing very useful building and binding material, laying up a store of iron ore and rendering a barren soil fertile for mankind.* It is human nature; the buffoon who amuses the crowd is plastered with gold, while the man of science, the benefactor of humanity more often than not dies in poverty and neglect.

On the second evening of my stay here I received a visit from an interesting Afghan, Abdu Ghani Hodja. He was born in Yarkand and his mother was a Sart. A Russian doctor took a fancy to him when he was a lad, employed him in his service and took him to Moscow, where he grew up and learnt Russian perfectly; he afterwards went to Afghanistan. He was Afghan Consul in Yarkand, though not yet recognized officially by the Chinese Government.

* Cf. *Geological Magazine*, LXVIII, October 1931.

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He was now on his way back from Khotan, where he had been on some confidential mission. He told me interesting stories of his travels and about conditions in Afghanistan. In 1919, on the staff of the Afghan Minister, Wali Khan, he had come through Bukhara to Tashkent. In Bukhara he had advised the Emir, in view of the numerous so-called "fronts" in the Autonomous Republic of Turkestan, to send his valuables and treasure through Afghanistan to European banks and supply himself with arms and ammunition. But the Bukhariots considered themselves in complete safety, trusting that so sacred a place as Bukhara-i-Sherif, the Noble, the very home of Moslem learning and sanctity, could not possibly be exposed to invasion by the dogs of kaffirs. Did she not enjoy the protection of the saints of Islam, and in particular of the Holy Bagauddin, whose tomb is on the outskirts of the city itself?

"Really, last year, when the Bolsheviks fired shells into the town from the railway, a distance of eight miles, Saint Bagauddin destroyed the shells and they did no harm to the city," they explained. Afterwards the Young Bukhariot party, with the help of the Bolsheviks, overthrew the Emir, when Russian and Bukhara Jews seized the power. The Emir fled to Afghanistan and all his treasure in gold and precious stones, valued at tens of millions of pounds sterling, fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks.

Wali Khan was the first Afghan ambassador to make the tour of the Governments of Europe and America. From Tashkent they went to the "Sea of Aral" station, hoping to cross the plateau of Ust Urt by motor to the Caspian, and then via Astrakhan to Moscow. They were escorted by a convoy of ten Red soldiers, but when they reached Ust Urt their guard learnt that there was a "British fleet" on the Caspian, so that route was closed to "comrades." So they had to return to the "Sea of Aral" station and ask

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CHINESE OFFICIALS AND THEIR FAMILIES, KARGHALIK

WAYSIDE BOOTH

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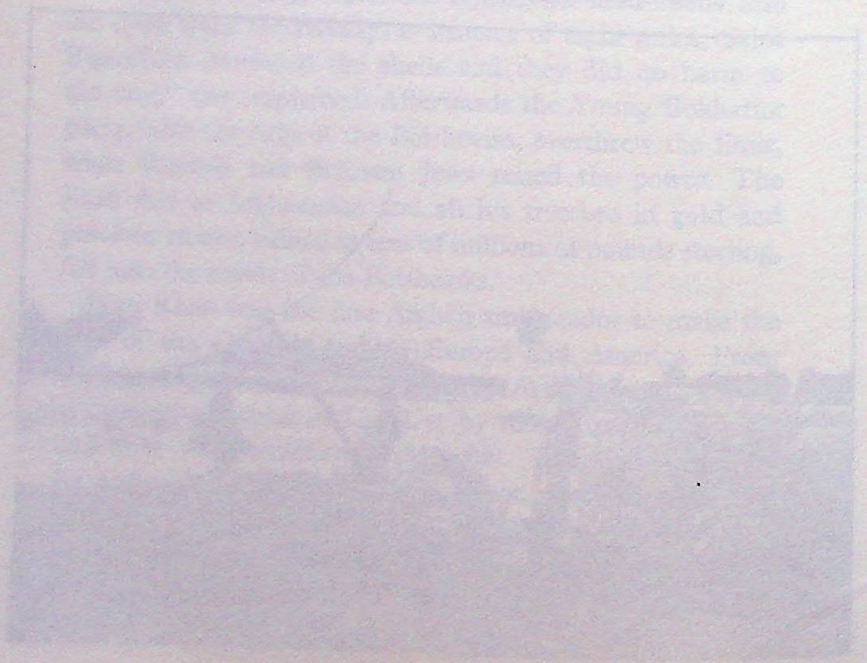

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General Dutoff, commanding the detachment of Cossacks operating against the Bolsheviks on that side, for a safe conduct for the Mission in cars as far as the station of Aktiubinsk on the Orenburg line.

From Abdu Ghani I learnt the fate of a friend of mine, widow of an old comrade, Mrs. H. B. She had entered the service of the Afghan Mission as typist and, under the protection of the Afghan flag, succeeded in making her escape out of Soviet Russia.

The Mission reached Moscow, and then went through Latvia to Berlin, eventually visiting Switzerland, Rome, Paris, Brussels; crossed to America, and over to Shanghai via Calcutta and Karachi, through Persia to Angora, and home, thus having completed the grand tour of the world. Abdu Ghani had been to Moscow again and through Kushk, Herat, and Kandahar to Kabul. He expressed the greatest contempt for the Bolsheviks. He was now on his way back to Kabul, where his bride was waiting for him.

"We have monogamy now in Afghanistan just as you have in Europe," he explained with considerable pride.

"Why did you Afghans give up polygamy?" I asked him. "Was it from purely ethical motives?"

"Of course," he replied. "But besides, there is a shortage of women in our country; there are only eight hundred women for every thousand males, and as rich men took several, the poor often had to go without."

"But since the Koran and the Shariat permit polygamy for the Faithful, who can alter the law established by the Prophet himself?" I asked.

"The law of Mahomet permits us to have four wives at the same time. The Emir did not abrogate this law; he only insists that a husband shall show that he has means to maintain all his wives equally and respectably and he must love them all equally. For this there is a special com-

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mission of women which inspects households and asks the wives, and in the event of dissatisfaction on the part of any wife it immediately pronounces divorce," Abdu explained. "We have also stopped the very bad custom of the early betrothal of young girls of six or eight years to grown men on the payment of the *kalym*, after which the girl could not marry anyone else, and often enough when she grew up her fiancé would be an old man. Now there is absolutely free choice, and the marriageable age for girls has been fixed at fourteen."

"That is excellent," I said, and praised his new Afghan marriage laws.

In Kashgar a girl who is still unmarried at fourteen is considered an old maid. Sometimes they have been married and divorced and married again, even three times, by that age. They have a cruel custom of marrying little girls of ten and even less. It is a strange thing that Kashgar girls grow up suddenly, without the transition stage of "flapper-hood."

I asked him about the mineral wealth of his country. "You have the only deposit of lapis lazuli in the world," I said to him; "they talk about gold, and there is oil at Kandahar."

"Yes," he said, "we have plenty of minerals, but the Government is determined not to give them out to foreigners to develop. We shall wait until our young men come back from Europe, where they have gone to take courses; then we will develop and exploit our minerals with our own engineers."

"I'm afraid you'll want more than that, Abdu," I said, "the organization of a mining industry calls for lots of things besides young engineers fresh from the School of Mines."

At eleven o'clock on the morning of September 10th I rode out of the Place of Rooks. Abdu Ghani came to see me

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off and say good-bye. After a couple of miles through fields covered with crops we came out into a stony valley completely bare of vegetation, flat at first, but gradually passing into a gentle rise. This meant good-bye to the wide and fruitful oasis of Yarkand and the beginning of the mountain desert, with only a scrap of green dotted here and there. It was the end, too, of the plain of Kashgar. On both sides of the road I could see through the dusty haze the outlines of two rows of rising ground, the foothills of the massive mountain chain of Kuen Lun, the first ramparts of the great mountain wall which separates the plains of Central Asia from the plain of the Punjab. The whole surface of the ground was covered with gravels, coarse and fine. These extensive gravelly foothills are characteristic of the mountain ranges of Central Asia, and two interesting phenomena are associated with them. The first is the colour of the pebbles. Underneath these are of the natural tint of the rock from which they arose, but the upper surface is almost entirely black, often with a metallic lustre, the so-called desert sunburn. The stones are covered with a black film of oxides of iron and manganese, and Professor P. K. Aleksat, of Moscow University, in a few cases discovered silicon. As the material of this film is independent of the chemical composition of the stones, it is supposed that desert sunburn is formed out of those infinitesimal quantities of iron and manganese which are always present in the soil, water, plants, the air, dust, in fact, everywhere. It is formed excessively slowly, taking several centuries for a stone or exposed rock surface to acquire it. An important factor in its growth is evidently the chemical action of the sun's rays. It is, however, not confined to deserts, as I have observed it in the southern Urals at latitude 51° N., in a locality which could not be described as desert by any stretch of the imagination, and in the Tian Shan, while in true desert

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localities in southern and central Africa it is seldom observed.

The other curious phenomenon is that very many of the boulders and stones are split in two, exactly as though cut with a sharp knife. This splitting cannot be attributed to frost, as the surface is perfectly smooth. There are some other stones which look as though they were made up of two halves stuck together with a white stripe. This gives us the clue to the riddle. That white stripe is a vein of calcite. When the rock was being solidified in the bowels of the earth aeons ago, countless cracks were formed in it, which were filled with masses of calcite which acted as a cement. *Tout passe, tout casse,* and in the course of time these rocks are exposed and broken up; the boulders and pebbles that are formed are of course seamed with these veins of calcite, which is so strong that the stones will break across the cement, so that quite small pebbles may still have a fragment of calcite vein in them. Under the influence of rain-water this cement is eventually decomposed, and the two parts of the stone fall apart, leaving a perfectly smooth surface exposed. The traveller, on seeing the smooth and even faces of the split pebbles, cannot help wondering what gigantic force sliced these hard stones in two. If you ask a native, he is sure to reply,

"*Abdan, shaitan, taxir!*" ("Why, the devil, of course, Sir!")

Where the rows of hills approach each other, the road crosses sand dunes with a few greyish-green shoots of *Nitraria* and dark clumps of tamarisk and enters a little valley with some green in it, Bish Terek, the Five Poplars, a small oasis formed by a brook which springs out of the sand here, flows a mile or two and then loses itself in the ground. It is enough, however, to give life to this piece of desert, where groups of tall trees point to the presence of *kurganchi,* homesteads, with tiny gardens bright with asters

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and Indian pinks. There is bird life here too. Desert jays strut along the road; some species of chats flutter over the shrubs, kites soar overhead, and high in the heavens above stretches a long chain of cranes, welcoming our caravan with their trumpeting. They are our fellow travellers on the road, for it is September, and the birds are retreating from the north to the warm and sunny south, just as we are, to India.

It was strange to think that six years previously, sitting alone in the condemned cell of a Soviet prison, daily waiting to be taken out to be shot, I could hear the trumpeting of the cranes and the *honk honk* of the geese, wending their way southwards. Then I let my imagination take me with them to distant India. And now, here was I myself on the foothills of the Kuen Lun. My wildest dreams had come true.

Late in the evening we came to Langar, a sort of native inn at the edge of the oasis. Here for the first time we had to pitch a tent and begin the camp life of real travel.

"What about something to eat?" I asked my servant.

"The Sart in this *chai-khané* is a good cook and is now baking some good pies for us," said the fellow, evidently too lazy to get dinner ready from my stores. I was very hungry, as I had had nothing all day, so went to have a look at the pies. In an evil-smelling wooden dish, black with age and dirt, lay a pile of chopped onion and meat, a good deal more onion than meat. An unwashed Sart, rolling some lumps of dough on a board, took a handful of the chopped meat, plunging his grimy hands into the mess with evident gusto, and rolled it into a pie, which he stuck to the sides of a *tandyr* or native oven. When the pie was done, it detached itself and fell to the bottom.

It was such a repulsive operation that I forbade my servant once and for all ever again to offer me such products of the native cuisine, and told him to get me some dinner from

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the tinned food we had brought from Kashgar. Unfortunately, his culinary abilities were beneath contempt; he did not even know how to boil rice properly, and considered an abundant supply of onion essential to every dish. For the first few days I was poisoned by the fellow, and looked forward with dismay to the rest of the journey, quite hard enough as it was without this dreadful food. Fortunately, he turned out to be sensible and willing to learn, so that before long he was offering me very respectable curries and could make a good *palau* and roast mutton.

The next day, after riding through sandy and stony deserts, we arrived early in the afternoon at Kök Yar, Green Hill. This is the last village in Kashgaria on this route, the last populated place we should see till we reached the Nubra in Little Tibet. From it we were separated by five lofty mountain passes, the high, desert table-land of Karakoram, the almost impassable icy heights of Sasser-la, and the gloomy Vale of Glaciers.

At Kök Yar we spent three days with a friend of our *caravanbash*, or rather we camped in the little garden and yard of his house. There were plenty of flowers in his garden, but they were all planted without any sense. There were a few high poplars with leaves like planes, *Populus platanoides*, where the fowls came in the evening to roost, with tremendous fuss and clatter. A handsome, great, reddish Tibetan dog with long, silky coat came to be patted, after which he guarded my tent every night.

The brook on which the hamlet is built, which waters its gardens and fields, is very small, and the water salt and unpleasant to drink. Only along its banks, in its narrow valley, is there any vegetation. It is shut in on both sides by high walls of sandstone and conglomerate, completely devoid of vegetation, from which the mountain desert extends away into the remote distance. Many of the fields

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are sown with hemp, *Cannabis indica*, for the preparation of hashish, *anasha* or *bangi* as the Sarts call it, a strictly forbidden but important article of export into India.

The weather, cloudy for the past couple of days, now became cooler. We were rising imperceptibly, but substantially. The second day after our arrival at Kök Yar everything was covered with that haze, composed of extremely fine clayey and calcareous dust, which is so characteristic of Central Asiatic deserts. In the course of thousands of years it forms massive deposits of the rich fertile soil known as loess.

The little courtyard of our host's house presented a lively scene all through our stay. We were buying flour, barley, and lucerne for the men, horses, camels, and sheep. People were coming and going, leading laden donkeys and camels, and still more to gape at the sight of the equipment of a caravan for so long and distant a journey. An uninvited guest was a musician with his *dombra*, a kind of primitive guitar, on which he never stopped strumming. The *caravan-bash* took up his seat on a rug spread on the *supé* and unhurriedly gave his orders. The local menfolk offered a curious figure as they stood with spindles in their hands and a supply of wool in the breast of their *halats*, spinning incessantly so as not to waste any precious time, while they stared at the excitement. This habit of the men of never being parted from their spindles and constantly spinning wool has been borrowed from Tibet, where it is the general custom.

The organization of a convoy requires the greatest attention to detail, and it is impossible to rely upon the experience and foresight of the natives. For instance, after I had collected all the information possible as to the necessary quantities of feed for the horses, I doubted the figure they gave me. This brought a howl of protest from the

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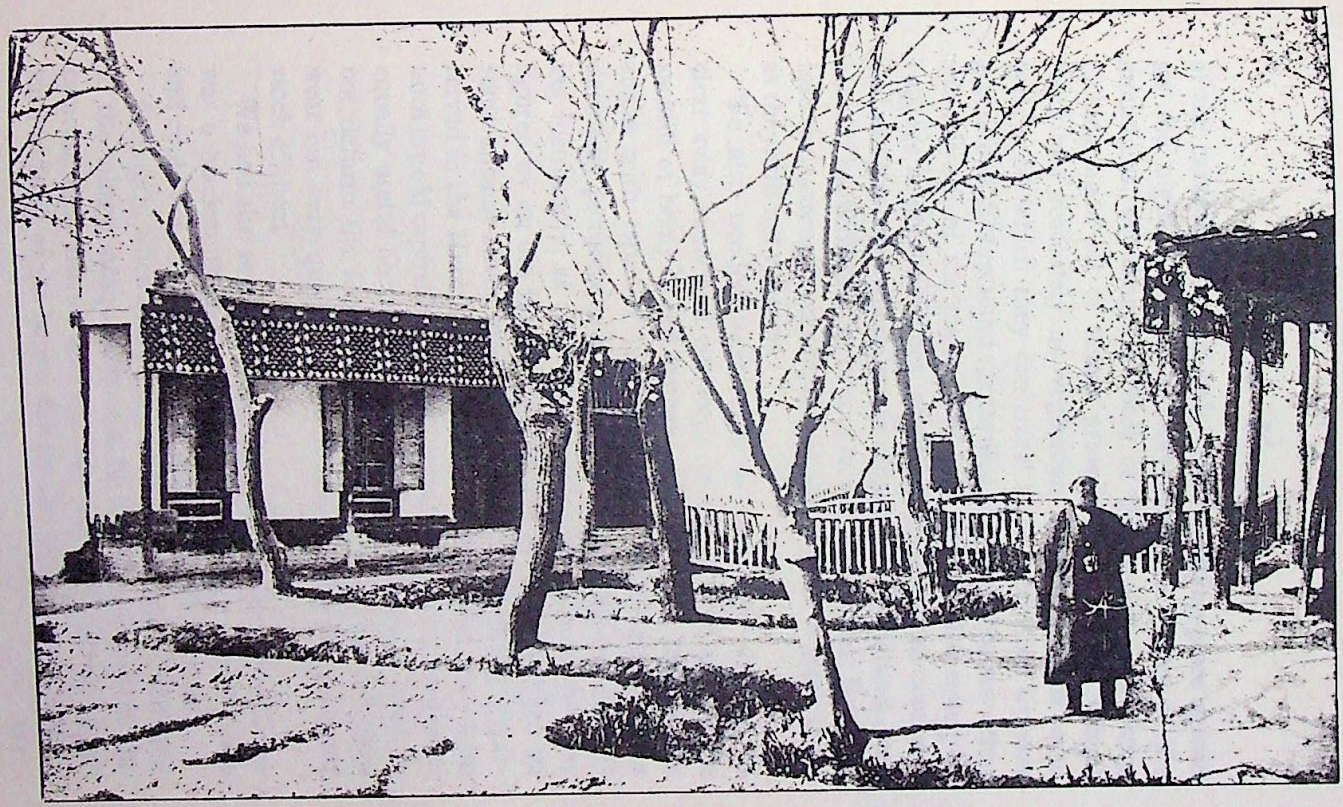
kerekeshi, who cried that we must hire more camels. Eventually I found that I had made a mistake. I should have trebled the figure.

While the Chinese are very careful of their domestic animals and feed and look after them well, the Sarts are mean with them. An extra pound of corn for the horses they look upon as sheer waste of money. They have, too, an extraordinary notion that on a mountain road the horses should be fed as little as possible. They justify this theory by saying that on the hard climb up to a lofty pass in rarefied air one should not overload the horses' stomachs with corn or give a lot of lucerne. To carry the fodder for the horses, pack-camels are required, which want food themselves, and that means more camels, and so on in a vicious circle. In our case we were taking the camels only as far as the glaciers of Sasser-la, whence we would send them back. Food for their return journey would be brought up by other camels to be dumped at fixed points along the road, and these would at once return. This shows what staff work is required in organizing an expedition over a long and barren mountain road. The camel is an extraordinary beast. Apart from his endurance and power of supporting hunger for a long time, he has another advantage. When fodder is exhausted, the natives will make dough from a little flour and put it into their mouths, sometimes actually forcing this unaccustomed food down their throats. Somehow or other, a camel can carry on for a long time on this forcible feeding without losing strength.

For our own meat supply we took sheep, more, in fact, than we really required, as the Kashgar sheep is a bigger animal than the Tibetan, and our *caravanbash* counted on selling the surplus in Tibet advantageously. For this little flock of ours, which would diminish daily, we had a special shepherd. It would start at daybreak and go independently



HOUSE AND GARDEN OF A NOTABLE, CHINESE TURKESTAN

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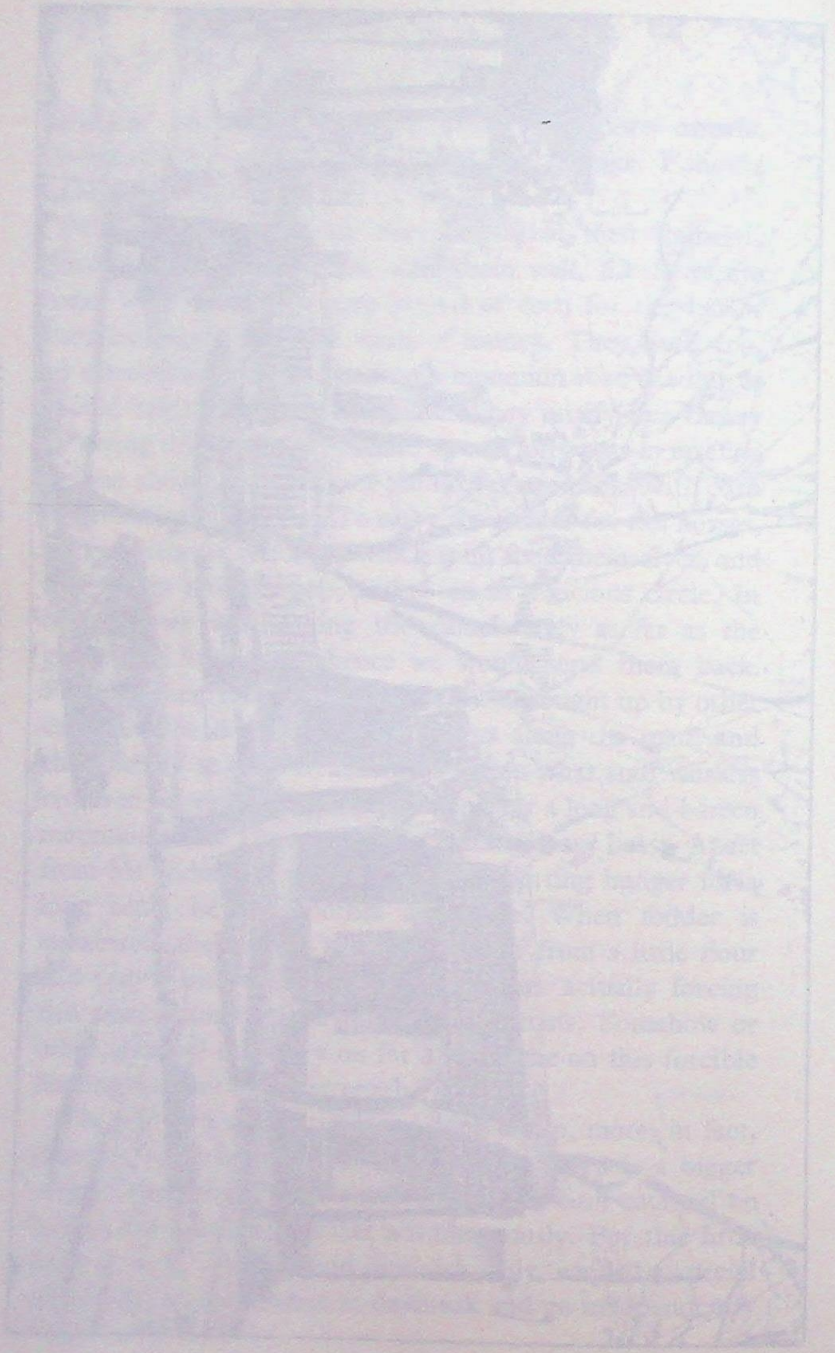

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of the caravan, stopping only at the camping-place agreed for the night. It found its way along the slopes of the mountains, avoiding the fords of the streams, the sheep picking up a bit of scanty grass here and there. Where there was absolutely no vegetation they were given some barley, on which they can travel for a long time without green food. Sheep stand the rarified air better than any other animals out of the plains. The best creature for riding or baggage at great altitudes, among glaciers, frozen cornices, and steep ascents where horses cannot pass, or, indeed, man himself has difficulty, is, of course, the *kutas* or yak. But they lose their strength very rapidly in the absence of green food, as they will not eat corn.

We also needed tools, such as picks and shovels, to clear away snow and cut steps in ice, as well as a whole sackful of boots of red leather with soft soles, laced at the ankles with tapes of various colours, which give them a decidedly picturesque appearance. These boots are interesting historically, as they are identical in design with those figured by an old Greek artist on the feet of Scythians on some ancient silver vases from Kul Ob and Nikopol, preserved in the Hermitage at Petrograd, or, at least, they were until my old capital became Leningrad. The natives find them equally useful on the plains or in the mountains. They do not deform the foot, and preserve its elasticity, but they wear out very quickly and it is necessary to carry a good stock of them.

We had also several sets of shoes for the horses and there was a blacksmith in the party. A horse that cast its shoe and could not be re-shod would quickly be out of action.

At length, when everything was ready, a service was held in the village mosque attended by all the members of the caravan, their friends and relatives and then, in the courtyard in front of the house, the *khudai*, literally a sacrifice to

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God. In fact, it is the entertainment to a feast of roast mutton and mutton broth of all present, invited and uninvited, of course with unlimited tea. For this *khudai* of ours we slaughtered a specially selected big, fat sheep.

In the morning of September 14th we began packing and loading up for the road. As is always the case at the beginning, everything went very slowly and everything went wrong. But I did not fluster them, knowing from experience that things do go slowly at first, but that everything settles down in due course. The East hates hurry, and speed, which is the Divinity of the European, is to the wiser Oriental the attribute of Shaitan.

"Why are you running from corner to corner, like Shaitan?" a Sart in my hearing once asked a man who was pacing the room in agitation In a book of Mahommedan etiquette bustle is described as extremely bad form.

It was noon before everything was ready. The camels, with ghostly tread, drew out into a long string, the donkeys trotted out, and the horses, one after another in proper order, stepped out on to the long road to which they were accustomed, while all the local population turned out to see us off and speed us on the way with their good wishes.

"*Bismillah il rakhim il rakhman!*" was heard, the prayer of the traveller.

For about three miles the road took us through fields shaded by trees, then along the stream, past steeply-dipping sandstones and conglomerates. Little flocks of small warblers, also following us to the south, flitted to and fro among the shrubs, and bright little titmice fluttered about, while the pipe of the chough told us that we had now entered the alpine zone. Whole flocks of these handsome birds flew over the barren slopes of the sandy hills, making the air echo with their high piping.

In the narrowest part of the road, where the steep cliffs

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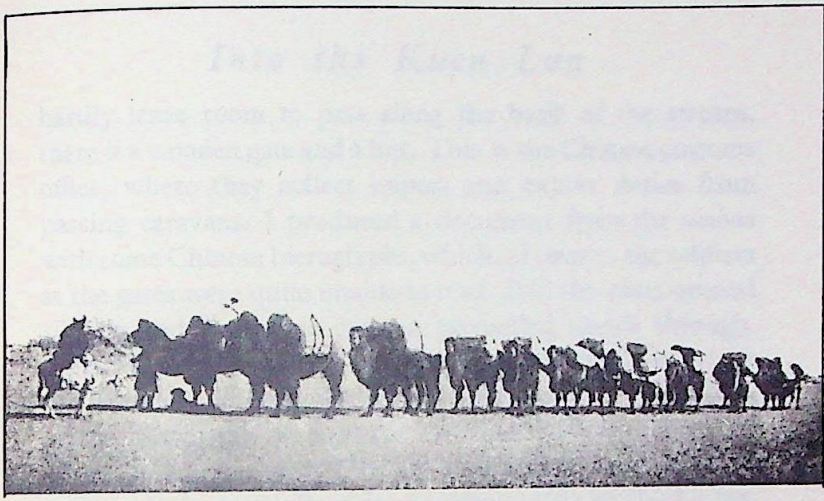
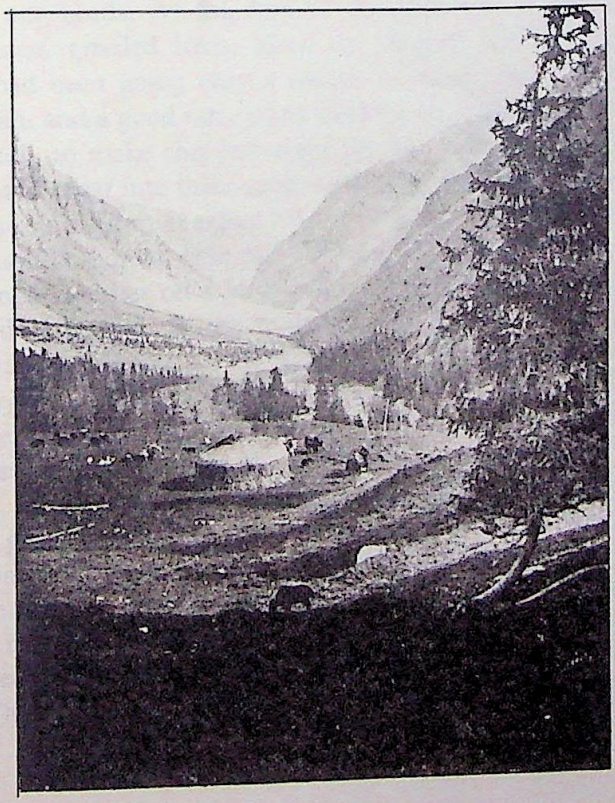


"... THE CAMELS ... DREW OUT INTO A LONG STRING. ..."



KIRGHIZ CAMP

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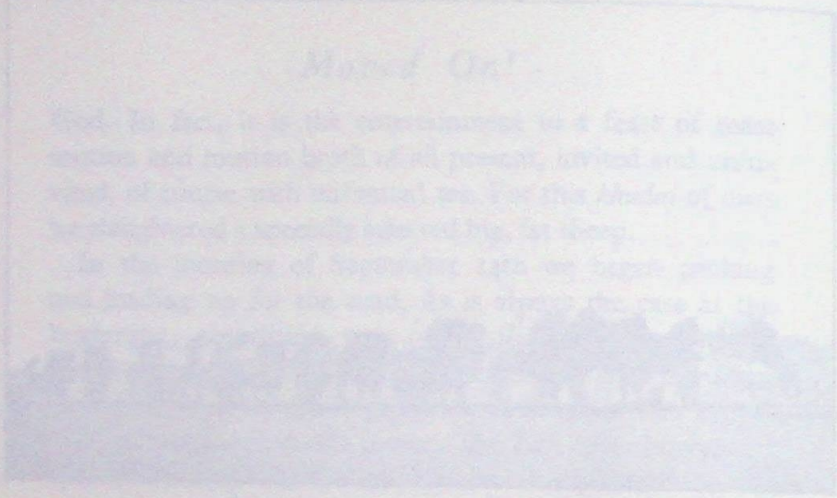

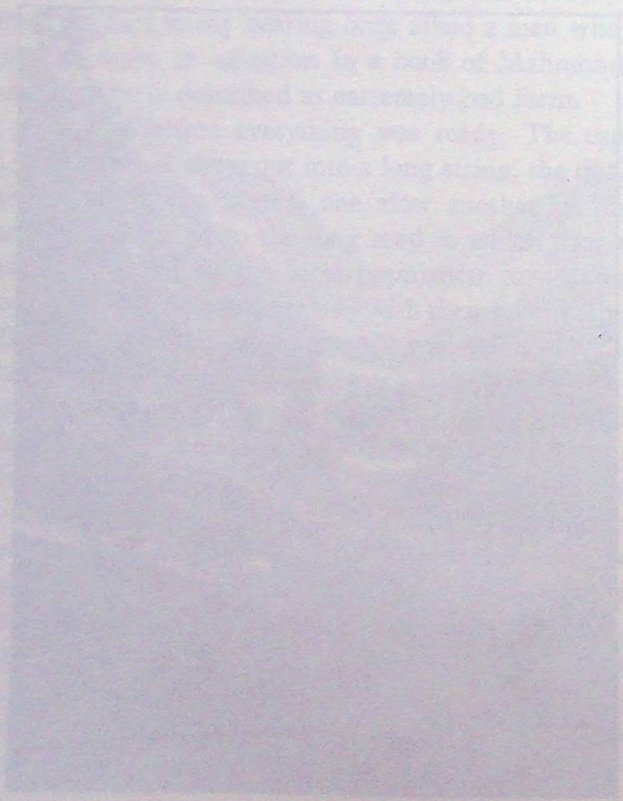

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hardly leave room to pass along the bank of the stream, there is a wooden gate and a hut. This is the Chinese customs office, where they collect import and export duties from passing caravans. I produced a document from the *amban* with some Chinese hieroglyphs, which, of course, the soldiers at the gates were quite unable to read. Still the gates opened silently and the whole caravan proceeded slowly through. This was the last of the territory actually administered by the Chinese authorities. Beyond this, up to the domains of the Maharajah of Kashmir, we saw neither soldier nor official. Then we forded the stream, sinking into the sand, and came out to a lofty ridge in which there yawned a forbidding-looking defile. Leaden clouds were now lowering over our heads. At the foot of the hills was a grove of scattered, gnarled trees. Here we stopped for the night. We had been going only a couple of hours, but it is the custom, and a good one, when starting on a long and tiring journey, to make the first stage an easy one, so as to get man and beast into their stride and accustomed to the work.

The spring here is called Psar. Our camp was picturesque. The saddle-horses were tied to the trees. The pack-horses, fastened together on a long rope in a circle, slowly walked round in a ring, in the middle of which sat one of the attendants holding a cord attached to the leading horse, gently driving them round. The walking-in of the horses and exercising them for a couple of hours without food is necessary to keep them fit. A tired horse cannot digest its food, which leads to a rheumatic inflammation of the hoof. The great pack-saddles, covered with cloths, are not taken off once during the whole journey for fear of colds. In the same way the camels were being driven round and round in a ring in the adjoining space by a little chap who had turned up from somewhere or other.

While they were pitching the tents I sat on a rug and

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drank tea. The water in the brook was clear and transparent, a relief after the salty water of the past four days. To the north the sky was clear; to the south, over the gloomy defile, lay our trail, over mountain tops, where dark clouds were gathering threateningly. A flock of kites circled for long in the air and then settled, shrieking, on the tall trees. They too were bound for India and, like us, chose this picturesque spot for their camp for the night.

Suddenly there was a howl of wind and a sand-devil was on top of us; everything was filled with sand and leaves from the trees. I dashed for refuge into the tent which was now ready. A stab of icy wind from the heights of the Kuen Lun, and then the rain.

It passed by. Later in the evening, after supper, the *caravanbash* came to my tent for orders. I asked him if we should see any game on the road.

"There are wild yaks," he replied, "but we are not likely to see them, as they avoid the caravan routes. Beyond Ak Tagh we shall probably see long-horned antelopes, chiru, and on top of the Khalistan Daryá there are bear, *ayu*, and snow leopard. There are hares everywhere," he concluded.

The bear are probably *Ursus pruinosus*, Lyd., or *U. lagomyarius*, Sev. and Prz. The chiru is *Pantholops hodgsoni*.

The night was clear, still, and warm. I lay awake a long time, my brain occupied with the adventure before me, the crossing of the Kuen Lun, into the highest table-land in the world, mountains, peaks, glaciers, gorges, ravines, the great backbone of Asia, which separates two worlds.

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CHAPTER VII

UP TO THE KARAKORAM

Next morning everything was ready smartly, and at half-past seven all the horses loaded up; I had drunk my morning coffee and was ready to mount, when there was a disturbance in the camp. I was quite familiar with the bad habit the Sarts have of riding stallions, and as it was an entire that I was riding myself I had given orders in Karghalyk, and repeated them to the *caravanbash* in Kök Yar, that there were not to be any mares in the party. I knew very well from bitter experience that there is always trouble, to say the least of it, if there are representatives of the equine fair sex among the jealous and quarrelsome native stallions. All through the night I had heard the neighing of our horses, and it was clear that they were excited and off their feed. In the morning mine, when saddled up and ready for me to mount, suddenly broke away and crashing off to the others, savagely attacked one of the pack animals that was standing there ready loaded. A dreadful din arose, the horses neighing, hooves flying, men shouting and swearing, and the air filled with bunches of horse-cloth, as my brute fastened with his teeth on to the neck of the pack-horse. It was, in fact, the scene inevitable in such cases, and it took a deal of trouble to separate the fighting animals and lead away from the scene of the fracas the apple of discord in the person of a small grey mare.

After this experience I called up the *caravanbash* to summon all hands on to parade and told them that I would stand no more nonsense, and that if I saw that mare again anywhere near the horses I would shoot her then and there without ceremony or warning, and held up my rifle to show

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that I meant business. So the grey mare disappeared from our caravan and was attached to the shepherd with his flock; she marched and bivouacked with them, a long way from our camp.

I rode ahead of the caravan. My guide was a little chestnut pack-horse with good paces that knew this "way of tribulation" very well, for he had done the road from Kök Yar to Leh more than once already. But when the road made a sharp turn to the south, towards the desert, the horse decided that it was time to outspan and made straight for the door of a hut by the roadside. The grooms came hurrying up with the other animals and quickly put our artful guide on the right road again; he stepped out bravely enough to face the hardships of hunger and *tutek* and icy passes.

Behind the pack-horses came the donkeys, carrying forage for us as far as Khalistan Daryá; they were driven by a small boy of about thirteen or fourteen dressed in a white shirt with a fur cap, into which he stuck a bunch of wild flowers, on his head. This youngster looked just like a young Ukrainian; he had the same great big eyes and dark brown hair, the very reverse of the Turki type of face. This type is not often met with in Kashgaria, but in Kök Yar I saw several, including some good-looking women.

The ravine through which we were now entering the ridge of Kuen Lun looked very gloomy; it was narrow and sterile, with rounded, clayey slopes of conglomerates, with here and there a bright green cluster of a grass, *Peganum harmala*, which no cattle will eat, and some of the greyish green of the strange cosmopolitan shrub, *Nitraria stroberi*. The ground was imperceptibly rising and we were already well above Kök Yar, which lies at about 6,400 feet. Then the sides of the valley approach, now consisting of sandstones, and in the bottom a stream makes its appearance. A few chats and redstarts, *Pratincola*, *Saxicola*, and *Ruticilla*

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erythrogaster, whistling cheerfully, somewhat livened the monotonous locality. The sun was obscured by the fine, dusty mist which hung over the hills.

The sandstones alternate with greyish-blue limestones; the path gets steeper and in places the horses have to scramble about the rocks, and then we suddenly dropped again and crossed to the other side of the ravine. The stream had already disappeared. We climbed again up the gorge and came out on to a grassy patch which opened out into a broad valley with a dead flat bottom covered with a dense, juicy grass like turf. Here there were growing fescue, *Festuca altaica*, a sedge, *Stipa orientalis*, a small reed and other plants, which offered a fine feed for the animals. Lower down, the valley was cut by a big, dry nullah, beyond which we overtook a long string of camels laden with wool and felt. The great brutes strode slowly and quietly forwards, and the rocks dully echoed their stealthy steps and the tinkling of the *botalas*, bells of thin sheet copper. A broad vein of dark red porphyrite cuts the limestone here, standing out clearly against the green herbage. The valley then began to narrow and then turned sharply to the right, where we came upon a hovel with a *khauz* or cistern of clear, good water. This is collected from a brook flowing down from Topa Davan, the Pass of Dust, which is tapped to water some fields sewn with millet and periodically fills the cistern. This spring is called the Ak Madjid, that is, the White Mosque, although there is not the ghost of a mosque in the place. We pitched camp here. I dismounted and ordered tea and lunch. It was cold; the wind was blowing from the north and I had to put on my overcoat for the first time.

A little later on there rode up an Indian on horseback. He greeted me in a friendly way and asked whither I was bound. We chatted for a time and he told me that he had served in the army in India for many years and knew Mr.

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Skrine very well, and his successor, Colonel R. Lyall. Then there came up a long string of camels; the *caravanbash* was a Kashgar man who knew me well; he was bound for Lhasa. In the evening yet another came up, consisting of nine horses and a mule, belonging to a Chinese official in Kashgar, Hadji Tungling. They were splendid horses; one in particular, a bright chestnut stallion, was full of mettle and looked bad-tempered, a fine, handsome animal which made light of his load. When he caught sight of our horses he began neighing loudly, stamping on the ground, challenging them to a fight.

The *caravanbash* of Hadji Tungling asked my permission to join up with my caravan.

"That would be good for us both," he said, "as we can help each other in the bad places and in the fords."

"That's all right," I assented, "only take care to keep that brute of a chestnut of yours at a respectful distance, and tie him up well so that he cannot break loose and make trouble among my animals."

"Of course," he agreed, "but don't you worry; that won't last long; when we get beyond Kufelang the horses will forget all their freshness. I only hope they get through all right to Leh. I could get a very good price for them there or in Kashmir."

Ak Madjid, which an hour ago had been a desert, was now thronged with life with all our caravans. Tents sprang up on all sides, with horse and camel lines, while donkeys browsed about in the barley or millet stubble. Camp fires began to blaze.

The altitude here was 8,870 feet. It was colder and colder and I was glad to put on my woollen underclothing, which had many a time saved me from the heavy frosts. This was a thick but light wool tissue, fleecy on one side like fur. It keeps the body warm. With a tunic or jacket of some close

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but light material, such as a gabardine, you get a light, warm costume that is ideal for shooting, travel in mountains, or cold countries. It has the advantage of not letting in the wind, nor is it heavy to wear; it does not bring on heavy perspiration, and makes a good protection against cold. If it turns warm, it is simple; all you have to do is to take off the outer jacket.

Before sunset clouds lowered over the valley and a fog covered the whole place, turning into a fine rain. There was nothing to do but turn in, although it was really too early to go to bed. So I lay and pondered over the journey in front of me.

Our task the next day was to cross Topa Davan. On the road to Leh, Topa Davan is the first, lowest, and easiest of the six bad passes, as none of the others is below 16,000 feet, while the Karakoram, the highest, attains an altitude of 18,550 feet, though Dr. von Le Coq gives it as 19,300 feet. For more than fourteen consecutive stages our horses would get no grazing, going through sterile mountain desert, and even after that it would hardly be possible to find any grass, as the little that does grow would all be chewed up by passing caravans. For since the closing of the road into Russia, traffic on this difficult route into India has increased, and with it the difficulty in securing food, which is worse even than in the days of the Forsyth Expedition. Over and over again we should have to ford dangerous mountain streams. Many a horse would succumb owing to the rarefied air, at the fords, in the blizzards, and on the glaciers and down the abysses. Would my food supply be adequate to maintain their strength as far as the first place where we should find plenty of fodder, in the Nubra valley? Our caravan consisted of thirteen horses, both pack and saddle, half a dozen donkeys, and ten camels. The donkeys would soon go back; of the camels some, carrying lucerne, barley, flour, and

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firewood, would dump their loads by the road for the return journey, while others would go all the way to Sasserla, where, *Khudai Khalassa*, they would be relieved by yaks.

From animals my thoughts turned to men. We may expect to lose a life or even more on this arduous journey. I had heard on many sides that it is by no means rare among the countless skeletons of horses, asses, and camels that mark the trail to find, too, the bones of men.

It was a strange fate that the first three geologists who dared to explore the fastnesses of this great rampart left their bones here. Adolf Schlagintweit, brutally done to death in Kashgar in 1857; Hayward killed at Yassin in 1868, and Ferdinand Stoliczka, the Austrian geologist and palaeontologist, who gave his life in the Indian service, died on the Karakoram in 1874. But these lifeless, inaccessible fastnesses of Kuen Lun, whither we were now bound, conceal vast wealth in their bowels and, perhaps, on their surface.

Here, for instance, is the only rich deposit in the world of a stone highly prized by the Chinese, called by them *uy*, that is, nephrite, a mineral that in other countries is found only sporadically, usually in the form of pebbles.

The ridge of Kuen Lun contains extremely rich gold-fields, scarcely known to the civilized world, but it would be hardly exaggeration to say that they exceed the famous fields of Klondyke in wealth. Placers extend along the northern flanks of this chain over an extent of five hundred and fifty miles, from the Karangu Tagh, the Mountain of Murk, on the west to the meridian of Lob Nor on the east. The gold occurs in alluvial placers and eluvial screes, and in the masses of friable conglomerates of post-Pliocene age. The source of the gold is in talc-schists, cut by numerous quartz veins. The richest deposits are grouped on the ridge called Russky, that is, Russian, by our famous explorer,

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N. M. Przewalski, near Akka Tagh, at a height of 16,000 feet, where work is possible only for two or three months in the year. The gold is very coarse. The auriferous level occurs below a thickness of 5 to 7 feet of overburden. There are no particular transport difficulties, only the rarefied air and great cold would make work difficult. The foresight of nature, however, has provided an excellent deposit of coal not far from the future gold workings. But the chief obstacle in the way of the exploitation of these fabulously rich deposits is the Chinese Dragon, which jealously guards the riches of Kuen Lun. The goldfields extend as far as Southern Tibet, where they form a carefully guarded source of wealth to the Dalai Lama, although worked only for three months in the year. This great source of wealth is one of the reasons for the jealous shielding of Eastern Tibet from greedy Europeans, which shows great wisdom on the part of the Dalai Lama. One of these days the devotees of Mammon in the form of civilized Europeans will find their way to these treasures of Kuen Lun. It will probably be the last great accumulation of the precious metal on earth for man's disposal, for there are no grounds for hoping for for the discovery of any further great gold-bearing region.

Lulled to sleep by the patter of the rain, I dreamt that I was riding a yak over the pass of Ak Tagh, straight down to Lhasa, the City of Mystery. But this dream was not prophetic.

The rain continued the next morning and the *caravanbash* came to report that, owing to the rain, Topa Davan would be impassable and we should have to wait where we were till the next day.

The view from our camping ground was depressing. On three sides a small plain, flat as a table, surrounded by lofty mountains, with a jagged outline, consisting of dark, bluish clay shales. Snow was already on the peaks, while

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down their flanks there slowly crept dark grey clouds, and the canals in the fields were full of dark, brown water. At one time the fine rain poured persistently, at another the sun broke through, but the northerly wind brought up clouds and bedewed us again with cold rain. The horses stood about, wet and dismal, among the barley stubble. On the floor where they had yesterday been threshing barley, boys with slings drove away the flocks of rock doves, *Columba rupestris*, and choughs, *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, which are very tame here. A bird of prey like a harrier with a yellow patch on the top of the head flew up and quietly perched on a pole near my tent, and sat there a long time, as though waiting for someone. My hands and feet were numbed with the cold. At times a fog came down from the peaks and enveloped the whole camp in its clammy embrace.

The next morning, when the first gleam of dawn had begun to show, a string of camels belonging to a big caravan passed my tent, followed by our own. Our little flock of sheep, with the mare, had gone up to the pass still earlier. We were rather late starting. We turned into a lateral gully among dark green and lilac shales, replaced farther on by a crystalline limestone. The flanks of the mountains here were covered with lank grass, on which a herd of wild yaks was grazing when Forsyth came through. Nowadays they keep well away from the route.

The rise up to the pass is very steep, but easy owing to the zigzags, and the path followed soft ground. Slowly we made our way up, the horses finding no difficulty in the road. On top, according to custom, we stopped to give the animals a breather, and then began going down again. On the flanks of the mountains there were little green clumps of what looked like moss, now glistening prettily in the rain. When I came to examine this moss closely I saw to my surprise small white flowers with pink centres. This quaint

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little plant, for some reason imitating a moss, consists of a quantity of interlaced stalks, slender as hair, crowned with small, thick leaflets. Its botanical name is *Arenaria musciformis*, Wall. On the down slope, on the south side of the pass, the rocks are covered with a real moss. This plant mimicry is a very strange phenomenon. The Euphorbias in Africa imitate various forms of cactus, for which they are generally mistaken. There are several other instances which I have seen in Africa, such as *Testudina elephantoides*, in the desert of the Karroo, which has a stalk that does not grow upwards but along the ground, exactly like the carapace of a tortoise, with little plates resembling the scutes. There are also *Remaria* and *Pleisophilus*, which look just like pebbles and split stones.

On the southern flank of the pass there is more vegetation, with the Siberian pea-tree, the *karagan*, *Caragana frutescens*, *chiliga* in Russian, a leguminous shrub, and *Nitraria*, and on the tops of the mountains there grows a low-growing juniper, *Juniperus pseudosabinus*. Dark-green spots of chlorite schist scattered here and there increase the green background. A little warbler was flitting about among the bushes, and some beautiful redstarts kept us company on the road to the south.

The descent is not steep and it was soft going. The path drops to the bottom of a lateral valley, where it enters a narrow, forbidding gorge through cliffs of crystalline limestone. The path disappears, passing into a steep, twisting gap between the cliffs, filled with huge boulders and lumps of white marble piled on top of each other in complete disorder. I had to use my hands to climb down among the rocks, scarcely able to pick my way through the narrow gaps between the boulders, sometimes jumping down a foot or two. I had great difficulty in leading my horse through this chaos of tumbled rocks. It is wonderful how the pack-

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horses find their way through, and quite incomprehensible how the camels do it.

When the trail leaves the limestones and enters the shale region again, the valley widens and the path follows the dry bed of the valley. Here I stopped and sat on a big rock to write up my notes while waiting for the caravan to catch me up. I had been walking from the top for an hour and a half. It began to rain, followed by sunshine, and then the pack-horses began to emerge from that dreadful gorge. They were accustomed to that sort of road, but the poor donkeys had a bad time. In places the men had to unload them and carry the loads themselves. By some miracle the camels got through without breaking their legs.

A little later our caravan entered the valley of the Khalistan Daryá. The valley is not broad but absolutely bare, with naked mountains and gloomy defiles. Black is the prevailing colour, as screes of black stones strew the slopes; blackish-green stones are visible in the river bed, though the pebbles are of granite and gneiss. The place is forbidding in appearance, gloomy and wild.

Here we made a halt for lunch and to give the poor animals a breather to rest their legs after the unaccustomed gymnastic exercise. Then we rode upstream, rising one minute high above the river, dropping down at others to ford it, to avoid vertical cliffs. A little farther on the valley is somewhat enlivened by a few trees. Willows grow, and poplars, high tamarisks, very tall bushes of briar, 10 to 12 feet high, with bright red berries and a few belated pink flowers, a bunch or two of *Ephedra* with bright red berries recalling raspberries, and the inevitable *Nitraria* covered with ripe fruit like black currants. Clematis occurs here, *C. orientalis*, Linn., and its variety *acutifolia* entwines the trunks of the lofty trees up to their very crowns, enveloping them with an immense fluffy mass of their ripe white

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seed. This clematis really seems to be the most widely spread and hardiest of all our Central Asiatic plants; it is met with everywhere, even in our high, arid, sterile localities of the Karakoram.

After fording the river five times, we pitched camp on a small green space that was pretty though wild. Around towered sheer, lofty cliffs; the stream bustled by busily, filling the dale with its murmur. On its banks grew giant briars, huge shady poplars and alongside them a strange-looking plant with a dark red trunk and long, red, thin, straight branches, 12 to 15 feet high, very like a tamarisk. When I went up close I saw that the lower branches were covered not with scales, but with long, narrow leaves. It seems that in this damp mountain valley the tamarisk had begun to develop a more suitable form of leaf, here primitive, where is no danger of great loss by evaporation. This was *Hololachne shawiana*, Hook., an interesting shrub characteristic of these alpine valleys. The rocky banks of the river, consisting of olivine rocks, where washed by the water, take on a brilliant dark violet colour with a metallic lustre. Some species of small sandpiper was walking about on the sand, whistling cheerfully. Our sheep, which were quite at liberty but never dreamt of wandering far from mankind, were grazing quietly, making quite a pretty picture like a eighteenth-century French pastoral. They walked into the river at the fords without any trouble, without even being driven, though sometimes they had to swim. Their shepherd rode across on a tiny shaggy donkey, and he too had to swim where the water was deep. The bottom was gravelly, without big stones, so there was no danger for the horses, only the current was swift enough to make one giddy. To the north of our camp a lofty peak was visible. When we arrived a dark, leaden cloud was floating round it, but towards evening the sun came out,

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the cloud dispersed and now the snowy peak glistened like silver in the rays of the sun; in our snug dell it was warm and green.

The next morning I was out at six. The sun was up but concealed behind the mountains, gilding the peaks on the west and the cliffs round our camp site, making it more picturesque than ever. The men for some reason were late loading up, and it was eight before we were on the road again. Farther up stream the vegetation improved still more; the trees were higher, and the willows and the dark green buckthorn were very high too, the latter weighed down by the golden-yellow fruit, from which the Siberians make their favourite liqueur and excellent jam. *Hololachne* became immense, 12 or 15 feet high, with trunks five or six inches thick; a barberry, *Berberis ulicina*, grew in thickets along the banks with bunches of black and red berries. Little mauve asters grew in clumps among the stones, a plant that may be met with almost through Europe, Asia, and Africa, in gardens, in fields, on the mountains, and in the valleys. There grows here, too, a curious, very noticeable parasitic plant. It is just like small stag's antlers, covered with a velvety down, growing straight out of the ground. Outwardly it looks as though dusted with fine sand and covered with little scales of a brown or, more rarely, green colour. In young specimens the internal structure consists of a soft cellular tissue, but the old ones are woody, with thread-like growths beneath. This curious plant grows on rotten trunks. It looks very odd to see these antler-like plants sticking out of the ground.

The verdure is confined to the actual neighbourhood of the river. The sides of the mountains are bare and lifeless, consisting of olivine rocks, but among the boulders there are schists, serpentine, gabbro, and granite.

On the road we passed through a broad green expanse

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where a flock of sheep was grazing, while a second was shut in a big stone-walled enclosure by a spring. After crossing a small brook flowing down into the river we came upon some remains of kilns with scoriae from smelting copper. There is an outcrop of ore in the mountains not far from here; the ore is brought down here to be smelted with charcoal burnt from the trees that grow here. In the old days this copper was used in Kashgar for currency. Of course, operations were on a very small scale.

Farther on we came to the junction of two streams, the Uzun Ailiak, the Long Summer Camp, and Kuidy, which when combined form the Khalistan Daryá, the junction being marked by a high, black, forbidding rock. The ford here is very deep; the camels went over well enough, but I rode round with the horses another way over gravel banks formed by ancient floods. The trail goes high above the water among immense boulders and stones and I constantly had to dismount to climb over the rocks and lead the horse round. In places like that the clever brute stopped of his own accord to let me dismount; he knew perfectly well. We followed the left feeder, the road rising sharply and we found ourselves among a series of alpine meadows with close turf. There were no more trees at this altitude, but shrubs lingered on here and there. I stopped to lunch under a huge briar covered with a fine climbing asparagus, a plant that is raised with difficulty in pots in Kashgar and highly esteemed. While having something to eat, I was entertained by a covey of seven chukar, which came and enjoyed a sand bath under the lee of a huge rock without paying the slightest attention to me. Then our pack animals passed me in a long file, horses, donkeys, and camels, so that afterwards I had to ride slowly along at the tail of the caravan, as it was impossible to pass it on the narrow path through a huge granite scree. This had come tumbling down from a sheer,

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lofty cliff on the opposite bank of the stream which it dammed, so that the water was now boring a passage for itself through the mass of granite. The trail here is very difficult for horses, though camels stalk confidently over the smooth slippery rocks, thanks to the broad, soft soles of their feet.

The caravan of Hadji Tungling stopped at the first grass-covered alp, which gave a very respectable feed for his horses.

"Your caravan has gone on ahead," he said to me. "You will overtake it round the bend in the trail."

I had to ride on and for the twenty-first time that day forded the brook again, this time not without adventure. Here the river flows between great bluffs and the bottom is covered with a mass of big and little boulders which are difficult to discern owing to the swiftness of the current, and the horses are very liable to stumble. That is just what happened to my groom's animal, which came down in the middle of the stream, and the swift current prevented him recovering his feet again, as he was hardly up when he was swept off his legs again. The other men came to the rescue as quickly as they could and with great difficulty succeeded in getting the horse to the bank. My man had a cold ducking, of course, and my tea and lunch basket were in his saddle-bags. Fortunately, there was not very much water in the river or the consequences might have been very serious.

For our bivouac that night the *caravanbash* chose an unpleasant spot. At the foot of a sheer granite cliff there was a small open space of bare sand, which rose at the slightest puff of wind and bespattered everything. When I reprimanded him for choosing such a place, where we had to feed even the sheep out of our reserves, his excuse was that on the bit of green we had passed there was a nasty-tempered entire in Hadji Tungling's caravan that might

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have bitten our horses! This of course was all nonsense, his real reason being that it was a convenient spot to bury his reserves of barley for the return journey, only he did not like to say so.

The granite wall towering above us was eroded into capricious forms by the water at a higher level. On the other bank another cliff cut off the last rays of the setting sun, and the defile was plunged in a chill twilight. The horses stood on the lines champing barley. The camels gathered in groups. The drivers kneaded dough out of their flour and stuffed small lumps of it into their mouths, rubbing their necks when they tried to refuse it, pushing it with their hands right down their throats, taking care that they did not bring it up again. This was their daily ration of "concentrated food."

A strong wind sprang up and covered my frugal supper with fine sandy dust, filling my eyes and grating on my teeth. Now we were experiencing the discomforts of travel through mountain deserts.

At breakfast time next morning I saw a big string of camels fording the river, coming from Ak Tagh. We could hear the grunting of the camels and cries of the men, who have a special note to encourage the animals to enter the water and cheer them on through the ford. Two big black dogs sat with impassive dignity on the backs of the camels, shirking the unpleasant cold swim. That day we crossed the river eight times and frequently pack-horses came down in the water, drenching their packs. The third ford from our bivouac was the nastiest. Here the granite walls are very close together, and the river hurtles through the gorge among rocks and boulders scattered about its bed. We had first to cross the stream and then pick our way among the rocks upstream and then cut right across the current. This is so violent that it positively makes one giddy and gives the

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impression that the horse is standing still and the rocky banks streaming headlong past. If he were to stumble in a place like that, it could hardly be anything but fatal for horse and rider alike, and neither beast nor man could possibly recover his legs, much less stand up against the violence of the stream, and would inevitably be swept down into deeper water or dashed to pieces against the rocks. The men were perfectly well aware of the danger and watched and guided their animals very carefully. The danger was increased by the big stones on the bottom, and great falls of cliff, which the horses had to climb, always in the water, and often enough jump down into deeper water at the other side. The sheep avoided this and the other dangerous fords by some barely discernible goat's track over the granite mountains. Our road followed over dizzy cornices, high above the river, or over sandbanks and great falls of rock.

At last we left the granite belt and came into the region of crystalline schists and phyllites; the valley widened out, and alpine meadows appeared with short grass. On the flanks of the valley there were extensive gravel beds, old terraces left by a former regime of the river when it contained much more water. Farther down the valley we came to some fields of barley and a few huts, with people dressed like Kirghiz but of the so-called Aryan type, and some green meadows with good, juicy grass. This is the spring of Kuidy Mazar, of which I had heard a great deal from the natives; they told me that here there were rocks with *surats*, that is, pictures, and a strange race of men, neither Kirghiz nor Sart. H. W. Bellew mentions the illustrated stones in his description of the Forsyth Expedition, and so I was very much interested.

They lie near the road itself and are marked out by some sticks, so that they cannot be overlooked. On an upright granite boulder the surface is covered with a black film of

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"desert sunburn," on which is rudely carved the outlines of two ibex and five human hands with extended figures. The interpretation of this hieroglyphic is not difficult: it says quite clearly: "I killed twenty-five ibex." Inscriptions of this sort are quite common in the Alai range, which separates Ferghaná from the valley of the Alai and the Pamirs. I saw them in the pass of Kugart, in the pass of Tengiz Bai, at Mazar Hodja-i-Takhraut in Ferghaná, and other districts where there are Kara Kirghiz, that is, descendants of the ancient Saki or Sayaki. Only there they are more varied; at Kugart besides ibex there are figures of men with tails, and at Tengiz Bai cocks and other creatures. These drawings are very old and obviously antedate the Mahomedan conquest.

The few inhabitants of this valley came here, they say, twenty-five years ago from Yarkand and adopted the customs and manner of life of the Kirghiz, rearing sheep and growing barley. About a day's journey farther south there live about two hundred families of the same tribe; they have gardens and crops and are engaged in cattle-rearing. The tribe is called Pakpo, one of the few tribes of Tadjiks who have preserved a more or less pure type of *Homo alpinus*, according to Sir Aurel Stein's researches. The valleys of the near side of the Pamirs offer a rich field for research for the anthropologist, ethnographer, and archaeologist, with their relics of the great waves of Asiatic peoples. In the isolated valley of Karategin, the *Vallis Commedarum* of the Romans, I met with types which might pass for the originals of the portraits of ancient Greeks in the National Gallery in London. In our caravan alone there was a mixture of every sort of type, brunets, grey-eyed men with brown hair, men with thick beards, and others with quite hairless faces; some of the faces were of the Turki type, others purely Mongolian or Aryan. It was, in fact, a regular mixture

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typical of the population of Kashgaria. It would be strange to call them Mongols, as do some authors to the present day, who fail to distinguish the Turki peoples from the Mongolian.

But to return to our journey. The animal members of the party were delighted to find fresh grazing again, as they had not had any all the way from Ak Madjid. Only the bottom of the actual valley had any grass, the mountain slopes being quite bare, without either shrubs or trees. On the tops of the mountains on the south of the valley snow had already fallen. It was typical April weather: still and warm, with bright sunshine one minute, and then a breeze springs up, the sky is overcast, it turns suddenly cold, and a shower falls or a little dry snow.

The local folk were hurrying to get in their barley. I noticed that their sickles were not of the type usual in Turkestan, that is, like a small scythe, but of the general European form, crescent-shaped. Animal life was scarce here. Some kind of harrier flew over; a few chukar strutted about, and a sandpiper or two could be seen by the river. I was glad to see a light-coloured wagtail, *Motacilla luzoniensis*, Scop., pecking about near my tent; wagtails are indeed universal, and always seem to be the inseparable and cheerful comrade of mankind.

In the afternoon a caravan of pilgrims passed our camp, returning through India from Mecca. Their horses were dreadfully thin and evidently worn out, but they knew they were getting near home and good feeds and were going valiantly. The pilgrims' faces were tanned black from sunburn and the cold wind. Among them were two women, wrapped up from head to foot, and a little boy riding a good-looking Kashmir mare; he was nicely dressed, evidently the son of some rich, doting father. In his fox-fur cap this little pilgrim looked very smart. There was a Sart I

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knew in the party, returning from Srinagar. I stopped him to send back a letter to my friends in Kashgar and to ask him about the road.

"There is no more grazing for the animals at all," he told me, "and it is not yet very cold on the Karakoram. For four days there will be lots of *tutek*, and then it will be all right."

We were up early the next morning and regretfully left our last camping-ground with green food and living men. A mile along we passed the tomb of the saint, Kuidy Mazar, and then by a high stone wall enclosing an area with buildings inside. The massive gates were locked. This was a Chinese outpost, now empty.

We rode alongside the river for two more days, often fording it, and all the time slowly climbing, sometimes through a gorge, up cliffs and screes, over old moraines, sometimes on open level spaces with a little scanty wormwood growing here and there. The heights around us seemed lower and lower, but the snow on them seemed deeper and deeper. Here and there was a tiny spot of alpine meadow or patch of turf by a spring. At one place, at the mouth of a lateral gully called Turgail, at the top of which there is a glacier, we stopped to lunch on a patch of green, where blue primulas were in flower, with edelweiss, *Leontopodium alpinum*, Linn., and blue snowdrops, but this was the only pleasant spot in all these days. Everywhere else was naked rock, with only a little yellow moss, or an occasional *Nitraria*, reduced here from a tall shrub to a low, creeping plant. Here even clematis, having no tall trees to envelope with its countless tangles and white shroud, has become a lowly creeper. The leaves were pressed flat on the ground, with a little stalk in the middle, on the top of which was a white ball of seed, just like that of a dandelion. Then we saw rhubarb, the round, flat rosettes of the foliage

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showing up as dark green spots on the screes of granite or shale.

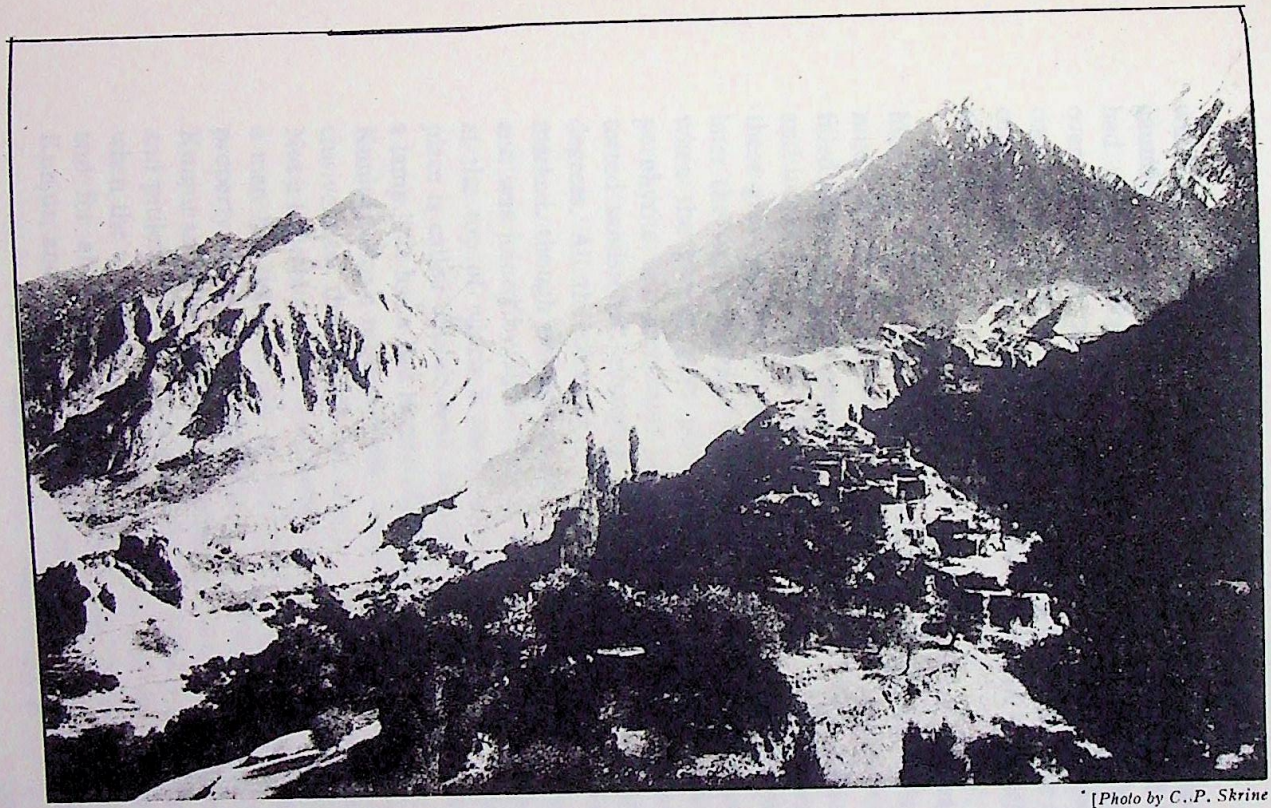
The surface of the granite, not being protected by any covering of grass or earth, constantly washed by the rain, frozen at night and baked by day, is weathered into a friable crust which quickly breaks down into sand.

Our last camp before the pass was at 13,000 feet, and at that altitude we felt fatigued rapidly by any exertion, owing to the acceleration of the heart's action and shortness of breath on walking uphill. The snow-covered peaks were now our neighbours. The ground was all covered with stones, and it was not easy to find a place to pitch a tent. Behind us towered the first snowy crest of Kuen Lun, the peaks hidden in cloud. Working our way up the valleys of the torrents we did not notice the immense height. To-morrow we shall have to cross the Yangi Davan, the New Pass, at the lowest part of the chain and then by the valley of the Raskem Daryá up to the lofty plateau of Karakoram.

A flock of kites was circling in the sky; redstarts, *Ruticilla erythrogaster*, were flitting about the rocks; these accompanied us all the way to warmer climes, though, of course, not the same individuals which we had met down below on the foot-hills; those had by now probably reached Kashmir. It is hard to say whether it is the same white wag-tail strolling about near my tent now that visited me at Kuidy, or whether it is another individual, equally confiding and interested in mankind.

Choughs were very numerous here and their melodious note could be constantly heard in the gorges. Big flocks of rock doves with their white rumps were flying about; it is hard to say why they were more numerous here than at the less sterile lower levels.

It turned very cold directly the sun went down; a strong



[Photo by C. P. Skrine

LOOKING UP NAGAR VALLEY

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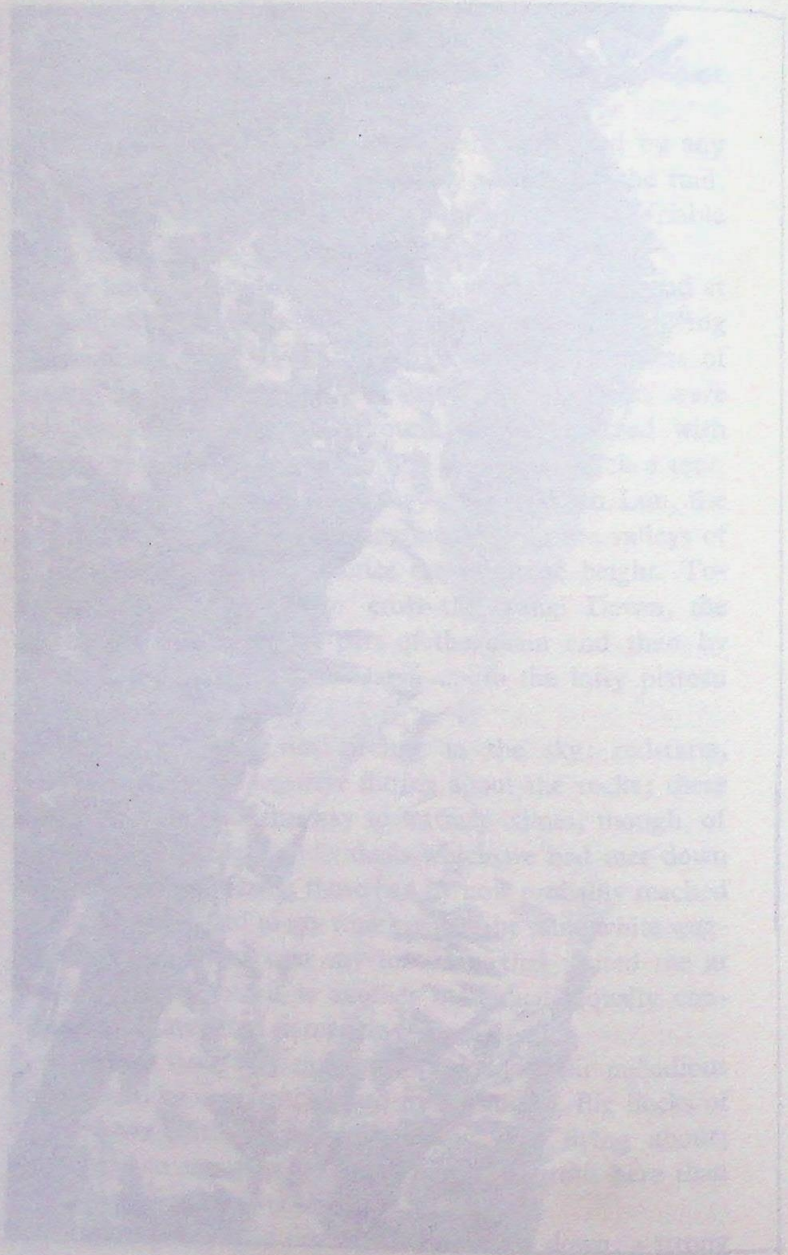

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wind sprang up, and I had to put on warm boots and gauntlets. Then I thought of a bottle of red wine that I had made in Kashgar three years previously. Mulled over the fire in an aluminium mug, it warmed up the cockles of my heart splendidly. During the night I felt a certain difficulty in breathing, due to the unaccustomed altitude.

The next morning broke cold and misty; leaden clouds hung over the peaks; the ground was wet and there was mud upon the road. At first the valley was very narrow and filled with rocky fragments broken off the crests above; and it was very difficult going threading our way between these great angular boulders and masses of stone. A little later the valley widened somewhat and the floor flattened, when the granite gave place to eruptive rocks; I noted porphyrite, and then came beds of heavily folded and contorted sandstones, plunging at an angle of about thirty degrees. All the time we were climbing; the ascent was marked, though not too steep. The valley kept widening and was joined by another on the right, on the west side, at the top of which a snowy crest was to be seen. This place is called Chirak Saldi, which means, "They have put a lamp." It has a bad reputation; it is the road to Hunza or Kunjut, once a robbers' eyrie, whose inhabitants lived exclusively on the plunder of caravans and the slave trade. Not a little blood and tears have been shed here, and many a man has departed life at this spot, or at least, lost his property and freedom, led away to captivity by this road to Kunjut and Nagar, gloomy mountain lairs inhabited by cruel and pitiless robbers. This state of affairs lasted until 1891, when the expedition of Colonel Durand* put an end once and for all to the highway robberies of the bandits of Kunjut, and introduced the blessing of peace, order, and

* v. C. P. Skrine, *Chinese Central Asia*, p. 22.

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safety on the great Leh-Yarkand road from China to India.

Anticipating impending trouble and interference with their liberties from the side of India, the men of Kunjut sent an envoy to Tashkent to the Governor-General of Turkestan, Baron Vrevsky, begging that they might be allowed to become subject to the Great White Tsar, reckoning, of course, that the Russian Government was so remote that they would be able to carry on their traditional business. But they were disappointed, as Baron Vrevsky advised them to go home and submit unconditionally to the Anglo-Indian raj.

The conversion of cruel and bloodthirsty brigands into loyal and peaceful citizens is not a unique phenomenon. In Central Asia there is another instance of a metamorphosis as remarkable. We have only to remember what violent and savage robbers were the Turcomans of the Trans-caspian province in Vambéry's time and what horrors he witnessed there. Their sphere of activity included Persia, the Caspian littoral, and the Orenburg steppes. After General Skobeleff's expedition and the submission of Akhal Teke, the Turcomans became peaceful, loyal, and honour-able citizens of the Russian Empire, and a Russian feels more at his ease among the Turcomans and in less danger of violence than, for instance, among his own *mujiks* of his own country.

Such thoughts and meditations passed through my head when our caravan slowly mounted towards the pass of Yangi Davan. The approach to the pass from the bottom of the valley took only half an hour, and as long in the pass itself. The mountains around are absolutely sterile; there are conglomerates below capped with limestones; the rise is very steep at last, but the trail is on soft ground, littered with great broken masses of limestone each of several tons weight. The horses, though we stopped to ease their lungs

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frequently, were panting and could hardly go; the altitude of the pass is 15,800 feet.

In the pass itself we met a violent and fearfully cold wind, which penetrated even my Siberian fur cap with double ear-flaps. It was absolutely impossible to stop here to get breath, and we had to hurry down as fast as we could. The descent was not steep, over a broad slope leading into a couple of shallow valleys and, far below, into a ravine. The sun showed his face, and the heavy, threatening clouds which had been hanging over the mountains dispersed. The trail entered a ravine through a conglomerate which had scattered its boulders all over the lower ground, so that the trail was such a mass of rocky fragments that it was impossible to ride down without danger of breaking the horse's legs or my own neck; so I dismounted and led the animal. In places the defile is very narrow, and simply covered with the bones of horses and camels, for it is a regular trap for the poor animals. A brook begins to trickle down it, which makes the going still harder. The road actually becomes worse when the conglomerates give way to shales, clayey sericite and phyllite schists, all crumpled and compressed. The place is very interesting to the geologist, but simply accursed for the traveller. Here sometimes pieces of lapis lazuli are picked up, hauynite, washed out of some vein, but though I kept my eyes wide open I did not see any traces of this mineral, the monopoly of which now belongs to Badakshan, in Afghanistan.

In the schist region the path goes by some very narrow ledges, all covered with stones, sometimes drops abruptly, zigzagging down the screes to the burn, along the stone-scattered bed, and then again rises, by an almost vertical cliff, to a narrow ledge at a considerable height above the water. "If you fall down there your bones will not be found," is an old Russian saying about such a place, although, as a

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matter of fact, it would be hard to find a spot like that anywhere in the whole of the vast Russian empire. The defile is five or six miles long, but it seems endless, and very wearying, both physically and mentally. The unending chain of *memento mori* in the form of rows of skeletons, and the constant attention to the animals, keep the nerves in a perpetual strain. At the end of the ravine the schists are cut by a thick seam of yellow quartz forming a big talus. A little farther, on the other side of the gorge, it goes high up the mountain side, looking like a vein of iron ore. The gully then widens out, the bottom flattens, covered always with stones, while the flanks are formed of vertical walls of old gravels hundreds of feet thick. There is still no sign of vegetation. This wearisome, slow, exhausting path through this gully tired me out. My knees ached and my head was as heavy as lead. So I was immensely relieved when in an opening in the gulch I saw the valley of Raskem Daryá running across the defile, that is, east by west. The river flows in a fairly broad valley bounded by completely bare but not lofty mountains of sandstones and schists. The valley itself forms the bed of the stream, filled with gravel, the actual flanks of the mountains being the banks. The stream is split into a number of rivulets, separated by sandbanks on which a few tamarisks find a footing. There is no other vegetation, not a single blade of grass. It was a depressing picture, a dull, grey sand-coloured background, absolutely lifeless. The breeze blowing up the valley raised clouds of dust. The mountain peaks are already covered with snow. We pitched our camp on one of the sandbanks among a few miserable tamarisks. This is the spring called Kulan Uldi, that means, the Wild Ass Died. To the west the valley is shut in by a conical peak. On the other side of the river out of a lateral valley there stretches a huge "cone of deposition," a fan-shaped mass of pebbles washed down

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by the rains and torrents, a phenomenon very characteristic of desert places where the erosion of the ground is not retarded by vegetation.

Raskem Daryá! How the name of this mysterious and barely accessible river, scarcely known to Europeans, roused my imagination in the days of my youth, when reading accounts of travel in the veiled lands of Central Asia! And now here was I myself in the very heart of the continent. On every side around I saw the impress of lifelessness, of separation from the living world, of desolation. Nature here is poor, indeed. Naked mountains, sand, and a little tamarisk, that is all! It is an extraordinary thing that three years later I met with the identical scenery in a totally different part of the world, in São Vicente, one of the Cape Verde Islands! When strolling about this African island with my good friend, Dr. Burr, I was astonished at the similarity of the landscape. It was just like Raskem Daryá again, the same naked, lifeless, desert mountains, the sand, and the waving tamarisk. Only there was this profound distinction, that Raskem Daryá is in the very core of the continent of Asia, as far away from the sea as it is possible to be on this earth, and the other on a volcanic island in the Atlantic Ocean!

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CHAPTER VIII

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD

We had three days' ride up the Raskem Daryá, to the spring Kufelang, where we should leave the valley of this gloomy river to climb the pass of Karakoram.

In the morning, when we were striking camp and loading the camels, a family of crows made their appearance, a pair of old birds and two youngsters. This was the Tibetan species, *Corvus tibetanus*, Hodgson, the usual escort of caravans on this road, in the hope of picking up a bit of something, sometimes getting a rich feast when a horse or camel collapses on the way. Apart from these creatures of ill omen, there were hardly any birds. This morning I flushed a redstart, which fluttered into a bush near by, evidently in the throes of starvation. At one spot on the river I saw a teal swimming, evidently a straggler from a migrating flock. It is hard to say whether our former feathered comrades fly over the mountains by some other route, or whether they fly across the lofty barrier in a single stage.

As a rule I rode ahead of the caravan, accompanied by a groom, in the Turkestan fashion; sometimes the *caravanbash* rode with us. The leading horse of the caravan was always a roan stallion, which the other horses followed obediently. After the horses came the donkeys and finally the camels. Some distance behind followed the caravan of Hadji Tungling, whose handsome stallion leader showed less mettle and pugnacity at these altitudes.

The river valley is very winding; ahead it looked all the time as though we were shut in by a wall of rock, when suddenly a passage opened before us and then again we were enclosed. The mountains consist of schists intersected by

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numerous quartz veins. Lateral ravines join in on both sides, sometimes with glaciers visible at their heads, and great fan-shaped taluses letting down into the river bed great masses of detritus. The flanks are covered with screes of various colours, white, grey, yellow, steel-grey, greenish, black, and so on, according to the colour of the schists, as the intense weathering and erosion is not hindered by any vegetation.

In spite of the apparent uniformity of the locality, the *mise en scène* keeps changing, quickly yet imperceptibly. Generally the trail follows the bed of the stream, which it is sometimes fording, sometimes crossing by short cuts over some bank. The clearness of the air is astonishing. The smallest details of the rocks are visible at a long way off, and one constantly makes mistakes in guessing distance. The weather, too, is changing all the time; at one moment bright sun in a clear sky, at another clouds fly up, throwing a shadow over the mountains, which change in tint, and the whole landscape is at once altered.

Suddenly a strong cold wind strikes up, the peaks are clothed in leaden clouds, which bespatter us with a fine, dry snow and the scene becomes wintry and mournful, the entrance of the next reach of the trail looks like a yawning gloomy chasm gaping to receive us. Then the clouds are rapidly dispersed, the sun shines out, illuminating the dark blue, alpine sky, while the peaks glisten like burnished silver in their new coat of snow. You think you are transferred by an enchanter's wand into a fairy world, or watching the transformation scene in some gigantic theatre. On the slopes the snow begins to take on the tint of the screes on which it has fallen; the gloomy defile presents the aspect of a beautiful mountain road, and mournful thoughts are dissipated in the brilliance of the picture, yielding place to a cheerful confidence. Such changes of weather, scene and feelings occur several times in a day. Sometimes everything is shrouded

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in the complete stillness of the desert, and when resting you can hear the ticking of your watch in your pocket. Sometimes distant sounds are wafted up, the origin of which one cannot guess. Once we were startled by the thundering roar of an explosion behind us, and a column of dust rose high into the air, as some great rock broke off from the mass and went crashing down.

The next morning we passed a spot called Sud Tash, Milk Stone, a big seam of quartz with an old working near it. The men said that gold was worked here formerly, which is quite likely, though nowadays the natives of Turkestan, either Western or Eastern, have lost the art of mining reef gold. In the Trans-Alai range, on the Pamir side, there is an ancient mine where there are still preserved great mortars hewn out of granite for the grinders in rolling mills for grinding auriferous quartz.

According to the descriptions of the old Arab geographers,* these workings are to be referred to the ninth and tenth centuries of our era, when the mining industry was flourishing in Turkestan.

At one place, just after a deep ford, we met a party of camel-drivers with their beasts, making for Tibet to lay in a big stock of provisions for the return journey, perhaps a year later. They very kindly offered me a tempting melon, but I did not accept it. Why should I deprive them of such a luxury as they would not see again for many a month? Money, after all would be a feeble recompense for their kindness, for what could they buy with it to replace their melon in that sterile wilderness?

It was warm at night, but I kept awakening as breathing became accelerated. The next morning there was a totally different scene before me, for the whole camp was covered

* See my article "Kuh-i-Sim, The Treasure of Turkestan," *Blackwood's Magazine*, August 1929.

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with snow. The peaks seemed nearer than ever, and their tops were clothed in a thick mass of leaden clouds. Everybody was short of breath and gasping; my face was swollen and the eyelids baggy and puffy, but this passed gradually during the day. The altitude was about 14,000 feet. It was cloudy and very cold. At the spring Kuk At Auzy, "the Grey Horse's Mouth," we passed a gloomy-looking spot where two ravines meet, and at the junction there are remains of a tumbledown stone building, not exactly a house, nor yet quite a fort; to the right the track goes up the valley of the Raskem Daryá, and to the left, up a dismal-looking gully between immense rocks, a track branches off to the Chinese frontier post of Shahidulla, the route generally followed by caravans when the rivers are full. The Indo-Chinese frontier properly speaking passes by the fort of Shahidulla, but the actual working frontier line near the Karakoram. On this day we were lucky enough to find two patches of some alpine grass, perhaps a species of *Carex*, where we were glad to stop to give our riding-horses some fresh grazing. The rest of the road consisted of nothing but dark, dismal rocks and screes.

We bivouacked at the spring called Igar Saldi, that is, "They saddled up." The sky was clear and bright, with twinkling stars. The Great Bear was very low, Jupiter glared down at me, and I could see the ruddy tint of Mars beneath him. But towards morning snow fell again, and covered the mountains and our camp. It turned very cold, and my hands and feet were numbed in spite of the warm clothing, and the frost nipped my face. At midday the snow stopped and the sun came out, but the icy wind kept up. The carcasses and skeletons of pack-animals became more and more numerous, until there was not a stretch of trail without them. A few birds put in their appearance here, some crested larks, *Galerida*, and a few white wagtails, evidently

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on their way to Kashmir by the same route as ourselves. We did not see any choughs in the Raskem Daryá.

On one piece of road I had occasion to give the *caravanbash* a sharp lesson. I had noticed for several days that discipline in the caravan was falling off: loading up in the mornings was getting slow and carelessly done; sites for bivouacs were badly chosen, the *caravanbash* not making it clear where we should camp, nor how many *putais* we should go in a day; he kept leaving the party and riding on ahead, in fact, neglecting his duties, all of which held little promise for the difficult days ahead. I attributed this to the effect of the altitude, as we were rising steadily every day. This particular morning he quarrelled with his companions, abused them, and without waiting for the loading up to be complete, rode on ahead, and I did not see him again for the rest of the day.

When I halted for lunch, and was examining some outcrops, the pack-horses passed and one of the mounted guides stopped with me. The camels were far behind. The passage to the spring Kufelang seemed unending, and it was evening when I, my groom, and the guide, leaving the valley, began to climb sharply until we were riding on a ledge very high above the stream, on the very edge of the cliff, from which the stream far below looked like a narrow tape. Suddenly, on turning a bluff, we found ourselves at the brink of an immense abyss on a narrow, uneven path overhanging a dizzy height. My left leg was actually hanging over the brink of the precipice; the path was steep, all the time overhanging the vertical face of the cliff. A single awkward movement, the slightest slip on the part of the horse, a pebble under his foot, and a fall into the abyss was inevitable. It was dusk. My heart was in my mouth . . . the horse stopped. Very cautiously, I slid back over his tail and drove him on in front of me, but even on foot it was a

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difficult and dangerous winding path along those weathered schists. Hitherto I had experienced that peculiar feeling of danger only in my sleep. When we were through on to a broader place and the road was safe we mounted again and rode on quickly. I was furious with the *caravanbash* for not warning me of the danger of the road, nor of the length of that stage. The camels would have to cross that fearful place in the dark, so I hurried on as quickly as I could to the bivouac, to send men back to help them.

When we reached the camp the *caravanbash* was sitting on his felt rug, unconcernedly smoking his pipe. Without dismounting, I hit him a good heavy blow with my crop across the shoulders and ordered him to take a rope, lanterns, and hurry back to meet the caravan.

The effect was instantaneous. Everybody awoke in a moment and a rescue party was smartly under way. There was no dinner for me that night, and I had to be thankful for a cup of tea and a biscuit. An hour later the *caravanbash* and his assistants returned alone. They had met the shepherd with our flock, who had told them that the camels were coming along the river valley.

"Is there a trail down the river?" I asked.

"Of course there is," replied the *caravanbash*.

"Then why the devil did you send us up the mountain, and risk life and limb for nothing over that awful place."

"I told the *kerekesh* to take you by the mountain track, because there are so many stones in the river bed," the idiot answered.

"Haven't we been riding for days down stony river beds?" I asked him in anger. "I'm sorry I let you off so lightly."

A quarter of an hour later the camels turned up, all in perfect order; it appeared that the trail had not been in any way different from the ordinary. That day we had done

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about forty miles, which was extraordinarily stupid, exhausting the animals for nothing before the most trying piece of all, for which they would want all their strength. If we had kept to the river we could have stopped for the night wherever we had liked, as Kufelang is merely a geographical expression, with nothing to distinguish it from any other locality. It is a Turki word corrupted by Tibetans from *Kapa bulgan*, meaning "They were downhearted," which expresses very well the feelings of travellers between the valleys of Kashgaria and the heights of Tibet.

The lesson I had given the *caravanbash* produced excellent results. Order was restored; everybody laid himself out to do his best, and the *caravanbash* himself awoke and became lively. He had some organizing capabilities and looked after his animals and men. Every evening he came to me to report and discuss the next day's journey.

A day or two later the *kerekeshi* were all smiles and showed their pleasure.

"Now everything goes well," they said. "Before the *caravanbash* thought only of his own comfort and his pipe; only it is a pity you gave him only one."

"It is not all over yet," I said to console them. "Next time I will give him much more."

"*Caravanbash yaman bulsa, adamliar atliar barnda uliadi*," they commented philosophically, which means that if the *caravanbash* is no good, both men and horses will die on the road, a very true observation.

The next morning before the sun was up it was extremely cold. Tea left in the teapot froze. But as the air was still the cold was easy to bear. Our camp was pitched in a broad valley, on an open barren space, under an immense bluff of conglomerate, probably lacustrine. River terraces were clearly to be seen. Here the river Kufelang, the upper reaches of the Raskem Daryá, joins a stream flowing from

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Ak Tagh. The locality consists of argillaceous shales standing almost vertically with red, grey, and brown sandstones resting uncomformably upon them. In places the sandstones have thin layers of a friable coal interbedded, two or three inches thick. Lithologically, these beds are the same as those with workable coal in Ferghaná; similar beds are coal-bearing, too, on the river Karatash in Kashgaria.

We rode uphill up a broad valley towards Ak Tagh. It was no longer a mountain district. We were riding over a gently undulating valley extending far around us, with here and there a chain of low hills, and gravel beds, a steppe, only without a trace of vegetation, on a gravel or sandy soil. The last plants which we had seen on the previous day were rhubarb and clematis. To-day there was nothing vegetable at all. But I could hear the scream of kites, and a small hawk flew by in the direction of Ak Tagh, and at a small spring there was a white wagtail. Both sides of the road were strewn with the bones of animals. In a cloudless sky the sun was burning. So long as there was no wind, the lips turn blue and the face is tanned brown. If there is any wind, the face is burned by the cold. The horses walked on steadily, breathing with difficulty. In spite of the brilliant sunshine, I felt a feeling of oppression. We were approaching the plateau of Karakoram. Beyond the small hills surrounding the valley through which we were painfully creeping the snowy peaks were visible here and there, while ahead rose a great white mountain, suddenly rearing itself out of the level plain. We drew nearer in the afternoon. This was Ak Tagh, the White Mountain, in the form of a long ridge running north and south. We were at about 16,000 feet, and the altitude reacted markedly both on man and beast. At the foot of the mountain there are numerous springs, marked by patches of turf, moss, and a few shrivelled bits of grass, now quite dry.

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Moved On!

Giving orders to camp a little farther on at the foot of the mountain under the lee of a big rock, I dismounted to examine the structure of the summit. But this was not quite so easy as it looked. I felt as though my body had doubled in weight, my legs were heavy as lead, my heart was thumping, and I was gasping for breath. Walking was possible only with great difficulty, and every few minutes I had to stop to breathe. At this height there is only two-thirds of the normal proportion of oxygen in the air, and the atmospheric pressure is reduced from fifteen pounds to the square inch on the surface of the body to only seven.

Ak Tagh appears to consist of silicious conglomerates, of a hard, yellowish-grey sandstone and sandy marl inter-stratified with thin veinlets of carbonaceous shale. The screes on the flanks of the mountain are whitish in colour, giving it the appearance of a snowy peak, whence its name, the White Mountain.

I was very tired after examining the mountain and could scarcely crawl to camp. Luckily, Salamat had noticed my plight in the distance and came out to meet me with my horse.

Camp was pitched at the very foot of the mountain among immense lumps of conglomerate fallen down from the peak and piled up on each other like a many-storied house. Hadji Tungling pitched his camp alongside mine, and the whole place was livened up by the numbers of camels, horses, donkeys, people, tents, and under a curtain of rocks our sheep were huddled; tied up with them was the apple of discord in our camp, the grey mare. But not a stallion was capable of paying her the slightest attention. My black quietly rested not far away, and Hadji Tungling's handsome entire stood with drooping head, oblivious of everything. Obviously the nearer we approach to heaven, the fiercest passions calm down, even love and jealousy.

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Our riding-horses received a little lucerne here and some barley, but the pack-animals got only barley; as these had not had any green food for a long time, they began greedily chewing our firewood, consisting of *burtse*, *Eurotia ceratoides*. This is a greenish-grey shrub, growing only five or six inches in height, but with thick roots two or three feet long and even more, which burn well even when damp, and give out an aromatic smell. Bountiful Nature has supplied the lofty deserts of the Karakoram and Pamirs with this valuable plant. *Eurotia*, *Carex*, *Artemisia* and *Ephedra*, these form the typical flora of the lofty plateaux of Central Asia, but only the *Carex* had any food value.

The men complained of difficulty in breathing and of headache. I felt as though just recovering from an exhausting illness, with a nasty taste in my mouth, a sort of fire inside me, bad headache, and great lassitude and thirst. Tea tasted horrible. Food was even worse. For lunch I had freshly roasted mutton, but no appetite whatever. To keep up my strength, I forced myself to eat a piece, but it tasted like absorbent cotton wool, and I could not swallow it. The mechanism refused to work. I became depressed and indifferent to everything. Left to myself, no doubt, I would not have made the slightest effort to move any farther. But consciousness remained active.

"If only I had a cylinder of oxygen, everything would be all right at once," was a thought that passed through my head.

Suddenly I remember that in my baggage I had a bottle of Italian vermouth.

"I will try that as medicine; in exhausting illnesses it helps to keep up the strength," I remembered.

It was a great effort to open my *yakhtan* or packbag and uncork the bottle, but the drink at once restored my strength and appetite returned, though I was still unable to swallow.

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Then I thought of another "hospital comfort," and took a cup of bovril. It had immediate effect, and revived me at once.

One of the men brought me a teal which he had caught at the spring. The poor bird was just as exhausted as I, probably from hunger. I did not try to revive it with vermouth and bovril, but just warmed it up and fed it with some rice softened in water; then I took it back to the spring and put it down on the moss and scattered some rice near it.

Towards evening a large caravan of a hundred horses arrived from India. Most of the wayfarers were pilgrims returning from Mecca, with a few women among them. One must have been rich, judging by her outfit, although she was strictly veiled; perhaps some wealthy widow who had completed the hadj. I noticed that all Indian Moslems met on the road greeted us in a friendly way, with "*Salaam!*" but the Kashgarlyki rode by in silence with a dull expression on their faces, like so many sheep. The pilgrims told us that heavy rains were falling in Ladak, and that they had felt the cold there severely.

The next day, September 27th, a Saturday, we had the long and difficult stage to Brangsa. Now we felt the *tutek* or mountain sickness worse than ever, and the horses began to collapse.

In the morning, when I inspected the camp, a hare, probably *Lepus tibetanus*, popped out of the rocks within a few feet of me, without showing any fear.

On this high plateau of Karakoram there are no foxes, wolves, nor vultures, excepting the lammergeier, *Gypaetos himalayanus*, sp., which, as is well known, does not feed on carrion. The consequence is that the carcasses of the dead animals lie untouched. Besides, as bacteria cannot stand the cold either, they do not rot, but are mummified, drying up and eventually falling away into powder. In the same

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way the skeletons turn into calcareous dust. At the watering places it is common to see, mixed with the pebbles and sand, rolled pieces of bone and a white sand, remains of animals which die by the thousand in this veritable road of death of the poor beasts.

There is, however, one remarkable, large animal which lives only on these heights and thrives in the rarefied air, and that is an antelope, the opongo or chiru. The guide warned me to have my rifle ready as on this stage we might come across it. At the same time the men advised us to ride as slowly as possible and to hold the horses well in hand. We were now approaching the most dangerous part of the whole journey. The dried mummies of horses, asses, and camels, lying still in the grip of their mortal convulsions, entire skeletons, grinning skulls, and a litter of bones spoke eloquently of the peril.

The locality had lost its mountainous character. We rode along a valley rising somewhat towards the south. Far to the east of a row of low hills a single, not very big, mountain stood out. The whole scene was peaceful and still, reminding me of the Pri-Ural steppes in the late autumn. Yet this was the road to the veritable Roof of the World. "If any road in the world deserves the name of *Via Dolorosa*, it is the caravan road over the Karakoram pass connecting Eastern Turkestan with India," writes Sven Hedin.* "Like an enormous Bridge of Sighs, it spans with its airy arches the highest mountain land of Asia and of the world."

But the appearance of the road in no way corresponds to its significance and the epithets applied to it. It is prosaic, not poetical.

After a couple of hours riding at an easy walk we came to an outcrop of limestones and the track turned to the left, leading us out to a sandy vale, and then to a sort of natural

* *Trans-Himalayas*, by Sven Hedin, ii. 245.

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gate formed by two bluffs, where trickled some freshly thawed water. Riding on, we saw a small pool still frozen over. This was a convenient place to camp in. Here and there, in the depressions of the ground, there grew a few blades of lank grass. In one such dell, about three hundred yards from us, we saw a pair of antelopes, which bounded off before they had hardly seen us. It is surprising how they can gallop at full speed in this rarefied air, in which even strong horses can scarcely walk. They must have highly specialized hearts and lungs.

We saw another pair farther on, and then two single ones, but they were too far off and the locality too open and exposed to make it possible to get within range, so we gave up the attempt and were returning to overtake the caravan when we came across three more antelopes, galloping along parallel to us at a distance of about four hundred yards. Obviously, in such a place stalking was out of the question, so we reluctantly abandoned the idea of a shoot.

A very exhausting stage. Even slow movement was extremely fatiguing, and the valley seemed endless. Ahead we could see what looked like a ravine or passage between rocks, from which sand-devils rose and twisted. Hour after hour we rode on without reaching the entrance, which kept receding, just like a mirage. The cold, penetrating wind became stronger and stronger, catching the breath and making respiration harder than ever. It blew right through my fur cap, chilled my head, making it ache desperately, and filled my eyes with dust. My lips, swollen and blue, cracked and blood oozed out. My eyes were inflamed. I tried to wrap my mouth up, as the Kirghiz do, but it was useless. The wind blew through everything. My whole body ached; my heart was pounding violently, and the taste of decay in my mouth grew worse and worse.

The situation became intolerable. I decided to press the

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horse a little, to overtake the long caravan and ride on ahead. Finding some shelter under the lee of a big rock, I stopped a minute to rest and recover my breath, and then rode on. Presently we came out on to a broad, flat dale, surrounded on all sides by low hills, where there were some pools of water and a few patches of dried alpine grass, which even the sheep could not eat.

Here some antelopes were grazing, singly and in small groups. It was a remarkable picture; it looked as though one could touch them. Here on the Roof of the World, where we could breathe only with the greatest difficulty, these extraordinary ruminants live and multiply, flourishing in this bare stony desert, tolerating the atmospheric conditions, and feeding on miserable scraps of withered grass.

To stalk them was out of the question. It was dead flat, with not a hummock, not a shrub, not even a stone behind which to take cover. So I decided to try the old trick of the men of the steppes; that is, to appear as though riding past but at the same time imperceptibly to approach within shot. Some of them, chiefly bucks, bolted at once, without letting me come within range, but I got within a couple of hundred yards of the herd, in which were a couple of fine bucks with fine heads. Taking cover behind Salamat and his horse, I carefully dismounted, sat down, took my rifle and told Salamat to move on. I was just taking aim at a big buck, when suddenly the horses plunged, and the antelopes were off, disappearing in an instant. It appeared that a violent gust of wind had blown my coat off the saddle, where I had put it when preparing to stalk. I was able to approach to a hundred paces of the rest of the herd, but there were only does and kids. What sense was there in shooting one unless I could get a trophy, especially as we had plenty of fresh meat?

And so I had only failure to report on my hunt after this

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very rare game, which is seldom even seen by a sportsman. The *caravanbash* tried to console me by telling me that we should see plenty more to-morrow. That night, as I lay awake gasping for breath, I pondered how to make up for my failure, but I was not fated to fulfil my ambition.

We stopped to camp at Kizil Tagh, the Red Mountain, at the foot of a hill which sheltered us from the fearful west wind. Everything was done very slowly. We laboured like sick people, and the horses stood with drooping heads, breathing heavily. As soon as the men had pitched camp they sat in a circle and slowly chewed dried apricots with the kernels. They complained of headache, their faces were black and puffy, and they all had a kind of half-suffocated appearance.

I felt thoroughly ill and weak, with no desire to eat or drink; for a long time I had not been able to face a glass of tea. I felt in a terribly jumpy, irritable condition, as though all my nerves were taut like a bowstring. The want of air was fearful, and I was overwhelmed by the thought that there were many miles to go and several days' journey yet before we should reach a level at which we could breathe in comfort, a sensation quite unknown to people under normal conditions, who hardly even realize that they are breathing.

Excelsior! The struggle to reach the heights, however alluring it sounds in the mouths of poets, has in fact definite limitations, beyond which there is only depression, misery, and lifelessness. When on earth, the nearer to heaven, the nearer to death!

Salamat's horse, which was standing near my tent, tugged at its line, shuddered and rolled on the ground in convulsions. One moment he lay on his side with the legs drawn up to his belly, the next he was stretched on his back with his neck twisted to one side, the legs twitching convulsively.

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They slit his nostril at once, to draw blood, but that failed to ease the poor brute, which was in agony all night. The next morning I saw the carcass, frozen hard in an unnatural, contorted position.

Early in the night the guide of the caravan had an attack of *tutek*. I immediately gave him eight drops of tincture of strophanthus, which is valuable as a heart stimulant in such cases. It is an extract from some kind of liana which grows in Africa, where the natives use it for poisoning their arrows. One of the pack-horses died during that night, and in the morning the splendid Karabair of the *caravanbash* had an attack, but blood-letting by an incision in the nostril gave it relief, and it recovered, though it had some difficulty in going as far as the next stage.

I took some strophanthus at night, but nevertheless awoke several times, gasping for breath. Sleep was made possible only by propping the head upon a high bolster, the higher the better. Before the morning they woke me to say that the cook was taken ill. A dose of strophanthus put him right.

And so that dreadful night wore on, the second on the plateau of Karakoram.

The next morning was terribly cold. The water in the buckets was frozen solid. The sky was clear and cloudless, dark blue in colour. On the right were some hills of a reddish limestone, on the left some kind of volcanic rock. We came out on to a broad, gravelly valley, and slowly marched on towards a row of hills. We passed a cairn of stones by the roadside, a memorial to the explorer Dalgleish, treacherously murdered here by an Afghan. The murderer wandered about Eastern Turkestan, India, and Afghanistan for years, seeking to cover his tracks, but Nemesis awaited him in the person of a Hindu detective, who, after many years' search, ran him down in the bazaar at Samarkand,

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where he was arrested by the Russian authorities and handed over to the Indian Government.

We came up to a range of rocky mountains, in which were a couple of rifts, out of which trickled two streams, uniting to form one. This is Brangsa, "tibetanized" from the Turki Baran Su, Sheep Water. We went into the right-hand ravine, very winding, following its shaly screes for a long time. We met a caravan of hadjis, men and women, with a little girl of about ten. What sufferings and privations the poor child must have had to go through on that interminable hadj and back home again? The sun was obscured by a curtain of heavy clouds, and a cold, penetrating wind blew right in our faces, nipping the cheeks, filling the eyes with tears, freezing the arms and legs.

Presently we came out into a broad, hummocky valley. The clayey soil was littered with gravel and shingle, but not a speck of grass, not a sign of vegetation. Here we left another of our pack-horses that died of *tutek* and added one more to that endless collection of desiccated carcasses, which neither beast nor bird do touch. In truth, it is a fearful place, "where no grey wolf doth roam, nor black crow bring his bones," in the words of the song of Susanin in the opera of Glinka, *His Life for the Tsar*. The remaining pack-horses kept on, obediently following their leader, not requiring driving, and the camels too, but after Ak Tagh they found the going harder and harder. The donkeys had been sent back at Kufelang long since. None of our bird companions was to be seen.

Here we met a type of caravan new to me, pack-horses from Tibet. The men had long hair behind, strange black caps, and a peculiar costume, with an amulet or sort of cross hung round their necks.

At the end of the valley the trail turned towards the west, between some low hills with soft outlines buried under

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clayey deposits, among which could be seen black screes of clay shales. This was the formidable Karakoram itself, the Black Scree. We were at the foot of the pass.

Though neither high nor steep, the rise was extremely severe on the animals, for the altitude was well over 18,000 feet. My horse could just walk, with tottering steps, so I stopped him to give him a breather every ten paces or so. I could clearly hear the thumping of his poor heart, as through the saddle I could feel the strokes of his one-horse-power engine. Every moment I expected him to stumble and come down. I would have dismounted to ease the poor animal, but only a mountaineer in training could walk in such a place, and I am plainsman, born and bred in the steppes. That was quite beyond my power.

At the foot of the pass itself I could not stand it any longer. I dismounted and led him by the rein to the top. There is no other place in the world, surely, where a man could ride on horseback at such an altitude.

The panorama from the top is disappointing. There is none of that majesty that one would expect from such a height; but you realize that for an immense distance around all the mountains, hills, valleys, and the great plateau are below you; that you are standing as though on the summit of some vast dome. This pass of Karakoram divides two empires, the British and the Chinese, and on the crest there are two frontier beacons. The British is a round stone pillar, and the Chinese a rough heap of stones.

In spite of the immense altitude, there was no snow, either on the pass or in the valleys below. At five in the evening we stopped. That day we had marched nine and a half hours without stopping. Towards the evening the wind sharpened so that it positively cut one's hands, neck, and face, piercing all furs and clothing. It was simply unendurable, and I was frozen to the bone. We had hardly stopped

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when a blizzard enveloped us in a fine, dry snow, hard as sand. I felt I could not carry on another minute. Unable to wait for the men to pitch my tent, for they worked desperately slowly, I took a warm horsecloth and, covering myself in it entirely, sat and waited till everything was ready, the tent pitched, the life-preserving bottle of vermouth and the bovril unpacked. At this height water boils at 187° F., so boiling water is only warm. You cannot cook an egg in it, much less meat.

During the night my horse had an attack of *tutek*. They just saved him by bleeding. He recovered, but now was very feeble and the next day he could hardly go, though he improved somewhat in the late afternoon.

In the morning three more men were taken ill, and I had to give them strophanthus. The night was fearfully cold, and I had to get up to look after my horse and the sick men.

What *is* this *tutek*, this mountain-sickness? The doctors call it *apohastia*. It is caused by altitude, but not by altitude alone. Various theories have been put forward to explain it, but none of them is entirely satisfactory, nor accounts for all the features. In acute cases there is bleeding from the nose, ears, and throat, the sufferer complains of violent headache and breathlessness, the heart's action becomes weaker and weaker, and finally stops altogether. Thus died the famous geologist Ferdinand Stoliczka, crossing Depsang. Obviously, it is extremely dangerous for persons with weak heart or lungs to venture over the Roof of the World.

It is an interesting fact that mountain-sickness is sometimes more violent at lower altitudes than at greater elevations. For instance, on Sasser-la it is easier to breathe than on Ak Tagh, although the latter is more than a thousand feet lower. É. Réclus thinks that in this case the evaporation of the moisture in the ground has some influence, but this seems hardly likely. The same phenomenon has been

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observed in the Andes, where some relatively low-lying localities bring on *soroche* or *puna* quicker than others at a higher altitude. In general, in the Andes mountain-sickness comes on at a lower altitude than in Asia, a height from 10,700 to 11,500 feet provoking the symptoms, which with us begin only about 16,000 feet. I do not know the explanation. When going up in aeroplanes or balloons men feel the height less and the symptoms of mountain-sickness appear at a greater altitude, but, on the other hand, men lose consciousness sooner. The blood pressure is reduced at a great height, and it loses oxygen rapidly. But both men and beasts acclimatize themselves easily, and the quantity of red corpuscles in the blood-stream increases. Thus, at La Paz, in Bolivia, at an altitude of 12,300 feet, mammalian blood contains twice as much haemoglobin as in Europe.

At a certain altitude alcohol ceases to act. I have read that in Quito drunkenness is unknown, and in those favoured regions of South America perpetual sobriety reigns. This offers scope for future investigators on the Karakoram.

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CHAPTER IX

OVER THE TOP

We left our bivouac late next morning, at half-past eight, tired out by the alarms of the night, and made our way down the river Depsang. At the junction of these two narrow valleys there is a small space on the right entirely covered with the bones and carcasses of animals and a low stone wall. This is the spring called Daulat Beg Uldi, which means "Daulat Beg died," perpetuating the memory of Sultan Said, a Mongol Khan of Kashgar, who in 1531 performed the almost incredible feat of invading Ladak and Baltistan over these heights. Here the trail divides, one branch leading due south to the valley of the Shyok, over the level but very dangerous plateau of Depsang. This is lower than the Karakoram, but *tutek* is even more severe there. The other goes round by the gorge of Kumdang and comes out on to the river Shyok at the spring Yangsang.

We had decided in Yarkand to take the latter, so we left the river, turned in a westerly direction, and began to rise gently to a plateau. To the left we could see a snow-covered chain of mountains, with a glistening glacier. This was the chain of Shyok, through which we should cross by the pass of Sasser-la. Ahead there stretched a picturesque range of jagged peaks of a ruddy colour. The whole valley of the Depsang is formed of immense glacial deposits, boulders, shingles, gravel, and conglomerates. We climbed up a steep spur washed by the spring waters in these colossal deposits of former glaciers. Rising above the valley, we found ourselves on a level area like a steppe, only, of course, without so much as a blade of grass. The valley gradually dropped down to the Shyok, which we followed for a long way. The

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sky was overcast, and a strong westerly wind was blowing, freezing our hands and legs. On the right three immense mountain masses reared themselves as it were straight out of the plain, covered with snow and ice from top to bottom. The nearest, which looked just like a huge, broken tooth, gives rise to the famous glacier of Shyok; the second, a broad, massive cone, and the third, the farthest, reminded me of our Caucasian Elbruz. This was the third highest mountain in the world, K 2, or Mt. Godwen Austen, which towers up to 28,278 feet. Out of this region of immense masses of ice and snow, of lofty mountains and deep, gloomy defiles, the land which on the maps is called Baltistan, there rise two great rivers, the Yarkand Daryá and the Indus, bringing life and fertility to the deserts. From here, too, disaster descends upon the valley of the Indus, sweeping away thousands of human lives and bringing ruin and desolation to multitudes.

As we dropped down into the valley of the Shyok, we could see on the right an immense bulk of ice, its surface like a huge curry comb. This was the notorious Shyok glacier itself, whose movement at times dams up the river, forming a great plug with a lake behind it. This may last for years, until one day the icy barrier yields to the steadily increasing pressure of the great quantity of water piled behind, and the flood comes crashing down the valley, destroying everything in its path, and devastating the fertile plain of the Indus. As will be remembered, such a disaster occurred only a few years ago. We were now standing, in truth, in such a region as that described by Lermontoff,

"... here the birth of the rivers is seen;
Here the first stirring of ominous cloud."

The Shyok is not very deep here, but it is broad: on the left bank, consisting of glacial deposits of broken-down

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granite and diorite, there are some old, shallow workings. They say the Tibetans used to win gold here, but flood-water put a stop to their operations.

Fording the river, we camped on the higher bank at the foot of a lofty slope. This spot is called Yapchang. There was no *tutek* here, in spite of the altitude, which is greater even than that of Ak Tagh.

It was difficult to light a candle, so little oxygen is there in the air, and it burned but feebly in my tent, giving a dim, wretched light. The flies of the tent quivered in the wind. I rolled myself up in all the wraps I could find and tried to warm myself with vermouth. I shuddered. Then there rose in the air a dull, prolonged howl, penetrating the very soul. The wolves of Tibet were welcoming us to their domain.

I awoke at five, and tried to light the candle. I had some difficulty in this, and when I succeeded it burnt with only a feeble flame, surrounded by a sort of aureole. The whole locality, including the camp itself, was buried in snow. The men said we could not go on and should have to stay there all day. A pleasant prospect! This was my third day without shaving, owing to the cold, the second without a wash, and it was long since I had drunk tea. We had no firewood, but luckily it was relatively warm. Everything was covered with thick snow, and we could not find *burtse* to dig up. My face was swollen, my lips inflamed, cracked, and bleeding; my eyes, too, were inflamed and watering constantly. I tried to heat a drop of water in the kettle over solidified spirit, but unsuccessfully. When it was light a little piece of blue sky showed itself, but was quickly covered again; the wind sprang up and we were soon enveloped in blizzard. The camel-drivers were groaning in misery, their eyes filled with tears. We had now been living in tents in the realm of gales for three weeks.

My thoughts turned back to my home, far away down

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there in the plains of Turkestan; now was the nicest time of year down there, the clear blue sky without a cloud, the clean, bracing air, the wonderful fruit, the flowers. . . . It all seemed another world, so infinitely far from these dreadful mountain deserts, where we were buried in snow, where every man is weak and ill, where cooking is impossible, where water cannot be boiled, where there is not even enough air to breathe, worst of all, where the organism revolts from food and even a candle refuses to burn.

What a difference even from the gloomy mountains of Tian Shan, though it is very cold in winter there too, or from the cold of Northern Russia. True, you may be frozen there; still, a man may keep his health, enjoy his food with zest, drink a glass of boiling tea and feel the better for it; and, above all, he can keep his house warm.

Over my tent I could hear the sound of crows' wings, for these birds of ill omen had turned up again; there was a pair of them at each camp, reminding us with their hateful croaking that they were waiting for their dinners. . . . Thousands of twisted and contorted carcasses of horses lay along the road; the hides entire, but the insides consumed. Crows begin their meal with the eyes, wolves with the belly.

Among our animals I caught sight of the flicker of a little pale bird; it was a white wagtail. I was sorry for the poor little creature, as it was exhausted and very tame. I hoped it would survive and follow us down to the smiling vales of Kashmir.

Thanks to the vermouth, I revived somewhat, but found movement difficult, and my heart thumped at the slightest exertion. No appetite, only a taste of decay in the mouth, as though after heavy doses of quinine. I craved for something salt and sharp, such as ham, or pickles, and I would have given anything for a soused herring!

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They fed the horses with lucerne, which we had brought with us, but the *caravanbash* warned the men not to give them too much.

The trail follows the river Shyok. The mountains around are grand; they have a particularly rugged character and are red or reddish-grey in tint, covered with snow as though silver. The broad valley narrows into a defile, where a glacier overhangs on the right, dropping steeply out of a cirque in a jagged mountain mass behind. This glacier forms a wall of ice, dozens of feet thick down the sides of the ravine. A second glacier, looking all bristly, approaches it, creeping along the floor, consisting of endless rows of grey and white ridges of ice.

On the left bank, opposite the glaciers, on the top of the rocky crest, there reared up a huge rocky mass of fantastic outline, like some ancient temple. Snow accumulating in the crevices and hollows formed architectural lines, suggestive of doors and windows. What a splendid place, I thought, for some romantic novelist to place the home of a mysterious Tibetan "Mahatma"!

The gorge here is narrow, and the whole floor occupied by the stream and its sediments. On the right a series of huge glaciers come down from some unseen heights, as though specially created for curious travellers to gape at. I noticed one miniature glacier, about 30 or 40 feet wide and 20 to 30 feet deep. There were enormous masses of ice filling the gullies or creeping down to the river bed. All the glaciers in the valley are advancing; they give rise to typical glacial deposits of shingle and boulders, form terraces of gravel, and the glacial dust, carried by the winds down the ravines, clogged our eyes as we rode.

Then the valley, as it were, closed up, as a huge wall of red limestone swings round in a half-circle, into which juts the ragged edge of a huge glacier. Over it hangs the mass of

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Ak Tagh, which reaches a height of 24,691 feet, all carved into fantastic patterns etched out in snow. The stream flows under the glacier, cutting its way through the lower end, leaving a narrow gangway, all strewn with huge boulders, between itself and the cliff. The trail along an old moraine drops down into this narrow corridor. It is a tough job for the poor horses, sliding over the slippery, ice-polished surface of the rocks and threading their way between the great boulders. At one place I saw stones spattered with blood from one of the wretched animals.

The valley broadens out and the red limestone gives way to yellow and greyish-green, calcareous shales, which in turn pass into a blackish-brown calcareous rock. This mournful spot has a gloomy, depressing appearance. Here we had to cross to the right bank by a ford that was dangerous owing to the big concealed rocks. It took us some time to cross the river, then make our way uphill, along some cascades, between great rocks, and once more across the river. The water was foaming and bubbling among the stones. Here one of the pack-horses fell, knocked over by the current, and was carried down. Luckily it was washed up against a projecting rock, so that the men were able to dash to the rescue and with ropes succeeded in getting the poor creature out on to the bank. They were soaked after plunging into the icy water, and of course could neither change nor dry their clothes. To warm them up I gave a cupful of pure spirit, with which I had had the forethought to arm myself in Kashgar. Regardless of the prohibition of the Prophet, they drank the fire-water without ill effect, and were none the worse for their icy bath.

Once again we had to ford the stream. Then the trail followed a narrow passage between enormous blackish-brown rocks, overhung on the right by a great ragged glacier. The whole place was strange and fantastic. It seemed

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unnatural and had a depressing effect upon me. It would have served as a perfect model for an illustration of Dante's Inferno. The shades of dusk were falling, the sky was murky and overcast, and the whole scene suggestive of a picture of the threshold of hell by a melancholy-mad painter.

Here we saw one of Nature's pranks. At a great height, in the midst of the black mass, was perched a colossal snow-white rock, probably an erratic of crystalline limestone, dumped there by some ancient glacier.

Leaving the bed of the stream, we climbed on to a high, broad terrace and here . . . I nearly toppled out of the saddle in astonishment. Round a bend in the track we met . . . Miss N., of the Swedish Mission in Kashgar, whose acquaintance I had made there, and an English girl from India! The Swedish Mission had halted at the pass of Sasser-la. The party consisted of seven missionaries, three men and four women, and their caravan of seventy horses. What a delight it was to meet those cultured Europeans in this wild spot! How charmed I was by their kindness and hospitality! Their caravan was a model of organization and perfectly equipped. They entertained me to a real dinner and a real breakfast next morning, specially prepared by the ladies. I had not eaten good food like that since leaving Yarkand. We sat late that night, exchanging impressions of the road before and behind us. They were nine days out of Leh. On the far side of Sasser-la they warned me against a poisonous weed, from eating which three of their horses had died. Really, this dreadful road seems specially created as a hell for horses.

The pleasant company, interesting conversation and good food revived my appetite, and the desire to eat returned. It was curious, too, that I thoroughly enjoyed drinking tea, which had repelled me for several days.

We parted next morning, when the Swedes resumed their

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journey towards Yapchang, while our caravan had to climb only a little higher to the foot of a glacier, which we had to cross the next morning before the sun had power enough to soften the snow and thaw the ice.

Some Bhoti appeared, that is, Tibetans, whom the Mahomedans call Butt, meaning idolaters. Their yaks took over from our camels and riding-horses. The Bhoti were picturesque in appearance, but frightfully dirty. In externals, costume, and character, they are very different from the Central Asiatics. They wore red caps trimmed with black sheepskin, with great ear-rings of beads threaded on wire; tangled black hair hung down their backs; they wore sheepskin coats, hanging down over the right shoulder, forming on the left side, above the girdle, a kind of pouch, which served as a receptacle for all sorts of things; half-open silver bangles tinkled on their wrists. Their manners and way of speaking, too, were totally different.

We climbed up an old moraine, out on to a open space at the foot of the glacier, where there was a *ravat*, or sort of rude stable and yard built of stones; this place is called Sirsil or Dakhni Turgi; the altitude is 15,400 feet. Camels come to collect goods brought from Leh and a handful of Tibetans live here. Strangely enough, there was more life at the foot of the glacier than lower down. A little grass pokes its way up between the smaller stones here and there; it is green and tender and the yaks graze on it. Flocks of doves flew about, and it was pleasant to hear again the melodious piping of the choughs; a white-winged redstart flew into my tent, which shows that this beautiful but delicate little bird crosses by Sasser-la into the Nubra valley.

The panorama from our camp was magnificent, especially at sunset. Above we could see a new terminal moraine and the mass of the glacier fading into the clouds, while the stream issuing from the glacier washed the old moraine, murmuring

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dully as it lost itself somewhere in the deep valley of the Shyok. On the slope on the left a dark red *chorten* stood out sharply, a religious monument symbolizing the five elements of Nature. These structures are raised by devout Tibetans in all sorts of places where there is the slightest excuse. This, our first, *chorten* was evidence that we were now entering the land of ancient faiths, Tibet the mysterious.

With drooping heads our poor horses stood on the lines. To-day they were given a little clover and just a little barley for a treat, but to-morrow they would get nothing. Between the high passes it is not wise to give horses much food, and human beings are well advised not to take much nourishment.

I awoke very early. The sky was cloudless and starry, and dawn was just beginning to glimmer in the east. I sipped a drop of vermouth. Washing, of course, was out of the question, and all the water was frozen. The cold recalled the Russian winter. The men were breaking camp slowly. Suddenly a party of Bhoti turned up, singing, with their yaks. They quickly loaded up their animals and brought me my riding-yak already saddled. It was not the first time in my life that I had the experience of riding one of these strange beasts, with the horns of a bull, the tail of a horse, a huge mane under his belly, and the long shaggy coat of a bear. I had ridden them in the Pamirs and the Tian Shan. The Bhoti also brought some very good ponies with them. This is a special breed of mountain horse, handsome, strong, and enduring. They do not give the impression of being stunted, as some ponies do, but are real, well-proportioned, well-built little horses, with small, good-looking head, a fine neck, and slender legs. In fact, they are half-sized Arabs. They go equally well under saddle or pack, have good manners, and quiet and obedient; even the entires are not quarrelsome. They would be ideal mounts for children. I had one when I

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was a child which my father had brought from Tashkent, where they call them, quite wrongly, Kashgarka, while in Kashgar itself they call them, equally incorrectly, Kashmir horses.

Our caravan, now with loaded yak instead of camels, started. A Bhot walked alongside me. A yak can be guided only approximately. All you have is a halter attached to an iron nose-ring and a *kamcha* or whip. There is, of course, no bit, and spurring his shaggy hide is quite useless. In dangerous places the guide takes the rope and leads the brute.

When we were approaching the glacier a covey of snow partridges, or snow pheasant, *Megaloperdix tibetanus*, Gould, was flushed. This is a big bird, rather like a red-legged partridge, only four or five times as big. They ran off, jumping quickly from stone to stone along the edge of the moraine. My guide dashed after them with his stick, just like a dog after a hare, and chased them a couple of hundred yards, of course, quite unsuccessfully. When he came back he was not even puffing! And this was at an altitude of over 17,000 feet, where an effort like that would have cost the life of a plainsman. So evidently it is not only the chiru, that long-horned antelope of the Karakoram, whose lungs and heart are especially adapted for speed in a country where ordinary creatures can hardly even live.

The mountains forming the valley of the glacier consist of limestones intersected by bands of hornblende granite. We kept to the left bank for some time, along the old moraine, and then suddenly turned sharply to the right up a lateral moraine and began to mount the glacier itself. The climb was extremely stiff, up a high, sheer slope of irregularly scattered stones and boulders covered with a film of frozen snow and ice. The horses and even the yaks kept slipping and tumbling. The Bhoti threw sand on the road, which

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they had brought from below on purpose, and walked ahead, carefully choosing the best places. My yak came down with me twice. Luckily, a yak does not roll over on to his side when he comes down, as a horse does, but simply subsides on to his belly, so one can slip off easily. Once on top of the glacier we kept to the lateral moraine. The surface of the glacier is smooth and was covered with a brilliant white layer of fresh snow. I had to put on dark glasses.

A valuable quality in the yak is his power of recognizing a crevasse under the snow, which a man cannot see. When the Bhoti have to cross a surface of a glacier full of hidden crevasses, a fall into which would be fatal for man or beast, they drive a few yaks ahead. The extraordinary brutes avoid the danger spots, and mark out a safe road.

After riding about two and a half miles over the glacier, we came out on to the pass, to see another fork of the same glacier. To the left of our road was an immense mass of ice lying between the peaks, the source of both branches. The altitude was 17,800 feet. The descent, though steep, was not troublesome nor dangerous. The sky was now quite clear, of a deep, dark blue, and the sun warmed our bones. Leaving the ice, the trail goes along the wall formed by sheer cliffs on the right, while on the left there is a bright, greenish-blue tarn. The narrow track between this and the cliffs was littered with rock fragments, boulders, and lumps of ice, a difficult and dangerous stretch, where at any step a horse could break its leg, dislocate its neck, or smash itself up. It was necessary to dismount and pick one's way carefully among the stones. A recently dead horse was a serious obstacle, difficult to move out of the way. A little farther a great mass of pure ice had come down and completely plugged our road. We had to climb over it and the descent on the far side called for the greatest caution, as it was extremely slippery on the smooth surface. I expected to fall

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any moment on to the sharp rocks below, on which was lying the still breathing body of an unfortunate yak that had fallen there a few days previously. The men with it had removed its load, but the poor creature with its broken legs was left to die of cold, hunger, and pain. This was not from cruelty, which is not a characteristic of the Bhoti, but in accordance with the law of the land where we now were. Western Tibet, or Ladak, is under the spiritual rule of the Dalai Lama. Temporal power used to be in the hands of kings of an ancient dynasty, but these were deposed and the country added to the domains of the Maharajah of Kashmir, the descendant of the ancient kings continuing to live as a private individual in a city which his ancestors had ruled so long. Now while Kashmir is a Mahommedan country, it has long been governed by a Hindu dynasty, according to whose tenets a bull or a cow is a sacred animal, and from the most ancient times death has been the penalty for killing one. This law has now been repealed, but a stern penalty still awaits the offender. As yaks are members of the *Bovidae*, both zoologically and practically, they did not dare to put the wretched brute out of its misery. But as I considered myself extra-territorial, and as too I had been condemned to death once already,* I did not hesitate to give the poor beast the *coup de grâce* in the form of a bullet through his head.

Now we had to make our way through a narrow gully between the cliffs and a wall of pure ice over a hundred feet high. The bottom of the ravine was a solid mass of fragments of ice and stone, here and there bespattered with the blood of pack animals. Even then the creep of the glacier and its screes was changing the surface of the trail every day, but during the warm season, when the glacier is stimulated, streams of water flow upon it and under it, the ice cracks,

* See my *Hunted through Central Asia*, Blackwoods, 1932.

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fragments break off, and a whole caravan may be overwhelmed.

This dreadful road leads to the nose of the glacier, which breaks off abruptly into a lake surrounded on all sides by big moraines, behind which snowy peaks rear their heads, a majestic but lifeless picture of nature at high altitudes.

Farther on, still another glacier, coming down from another direction, had dammed the ravine with a wall of ice. I could see the greenish translucence of icy grottoes, with blue pools at their feet. We had to climb high up the steep flanks of this moraine to cross it. The passage of this moraine, properly speaking, marks the end of the Sasser-la. Beyond lies a long descent among glacial deposits and hummocky patches of turf, down to the drop into a second and deeper valley running across the first, which acts as a dumping ground for even more glaciers than we had already seen.

We stopped on a patch of ground covered with a close-cropped alpine turf, just as though mown. The place was called Tutialiak, the Place of Mulberries. I had ridden eight and a half hours on yak-back that day without a bite of food. In spite of the height I felt no difficulty in breathing, and took no more strophanthus. I was not very tired, and even had an appetite, and enjoyed a glass of tea. The right side of my face ached terribly from chill in the cold wind of the Karakoram, but nobody in the caravan was ill.

Once more our disgusting companions the crows put in an appearance. High in the heavens a pair of lammergeier circled, while flocks of alpine doves flew about the camp. A few bunches of nettle grew here and there among the stones, and some little blue flowers.

Right opposite our camp, on the far side of the valley, where to-morrow's road awaited us, a rocky mountain reared his head, capped with snow. Huge glaciers, several

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miles in length, were creeping down his flanks, like partitions dividing the fangs of his crest. Two such monsters issued from the distant snowfields, uniting and flowing as a single mass. Separated by a ridge of ice, a still larger glacier stood out. But these streams of ice do not reach the transverse valley; they hang like gigantic white tongues on the slopes of that mighty crest, flinging down quantities of boulders, gravel and shingle.

The next day, after winding down a narrow track, we found ourselves at the foot of an immense glacier which filled up the whole valley, creeping down from an unknown height in the north. It is called Margistan, and really consists of four separate glaciers; it is eight miles long and about a mile broad; the snout is at about 14,300 feet, and the thickness of the ice a hundred and forty. The entire surface is covered with a thick layer of glacial debris. The great bulk of ice ends abruptly in a sheer wall with a few grottoes, out of which trickle rivulets of brown water covering the whole valley with glacial mud. I doubt if there is any other place in the world where more glaciers can be seen, or such a variety of them, as in the region of Sasser-la. For a geologist studying glaciation it is a real *locus classicus*.

The Bhoti are a cheerful, good-natured, civil folk. Our guide, walking alongside my yak, was all the time whistling on the pipes an air, oddly enough, which I had heard in the Alps. Another Bhot walked in front dancing to the tune, and as I was riding on a bull, the scene must have resembled some picture of ancient Hellas. In their cheerfulness the Bhoti form a marked contrast to the morose and surly Kashgarians whom we met upon the road returning from Mecca. Everything pointed to the fact that I was crossing the threshold of a new and strange country, hidden away from the world among these mountain masses and frozen crests.

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Presently we disturbed two vultures enjoying a feast off the carcass of a horse. The great birds had thoroughly cleaned the bones, but, to my surprise, the Bhoti rushed at the remains with their knives. I found that it was the tendons that they were after, a valuable thing in their simple domestic economy.

The trail follows the left bank of the valley, by screes and moraines; the ravine is narrow and deep, and we lost sight of the lofty, snowy crests. And now for the first time we saw signs that someone was paying attention to the road and doing some work on it. Up till now it had been a mere track, marked by the passage of animals. Presently we left the old track and crossed over to the right side by a new road, but the improvement in the going did not last for very long. We soon came to a place where great boulders of biotite granite weighing hundreds of tons each, were littered all over the valley. It was so difficult for the animals to make their way through this that the guide advised me to dismount and walk. This avalanche of granite, crashed down from some unseen glacier, had in a moment undone the work of many days, a good example of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of maintaining even a narrow track in the neighbourhood of glaciers.

Vegetation was now more frequent. I noticed a small, creeping *Ephedra*, a *Pyrethrum*, wormwood or *Artemisia*, milfoil, and a little, low-growing herb with innocent-looking, blue, bell-like flowers. Some seed-pods were already ripe. This was aconite, that deadly herb which killed the horses of the Swedish Mission as pitilessly as the perils and hardships of the Karakoram. The flowers and, above all, the seeds contain aconitine, an extremely powerful poisonous alkaloid. Four milligrams of the nitrate are sufficient to kill a healthy man in a few minutes. This harmless-looking little flower is a devilish trap for the unfortunate horses. Recovered from their *tutek*, safely through the mountain fords, escaped

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OVER THE TOP

A YAK CARAVAN

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from starvation, they ended by grazing on death in this valley of glaciers, for naturally they greedily took the first green thing they had seen for many days, vegetable syrens inviting them to the fatal kiss. The *kerekeshi* and guides watched the animals carefully all the time, but in spite of their attention fatal cases occurred. When we had just come through the stony chaos, we dropped down into a deep nullah and here, at the brook at the foot of a beetling cliff, we saw a Sart pilgrim and his wife, with their scanty belongings spread out on a small space. I stopped. The Sart came to me in tears and began to tell how he had lost two of his best horses five days previously from eating poisonous herbs, so that now he and his wife were in a simply desperate position, without means of transport and without food. Their Mussulman brothers are completely apathetic towards their brother pilgrims in distress upon the road, simply leaving them there to the tender mercies of fate. The missionaries in Ladak told me that they fairly often pick up sick hadjis along the road, abandoned by their comrades, and give them medical and material help.

The valley closes up into a very narrow defile with almost vertical sides and the road follows at a dizzy height. Down below an unseen stream murmurs in the deep and narrow cleft, while above tower great snowy chains.

The gorge became darker and darker; the road began to drop steeply towards the stream, and in the distance I could see a small verdant space with shrubs and bushes growing along the banks, now showing the tender tints of early autumn, buffs and reds. The nook was inviting us to stop and rest. Here was a regular wild garden, with great briars, a mass of thorns, grown into regular trees with bright red berries, big *Ephedras*, *Hololachne shawiana*, Hook, the tree-like leafy tamarisk, and among the green grass there lurked the little blue flowers of the deadly aconite.

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I longed to stop in this charming nook, whose verdure was so refreshing to the eye after the endless solitudes of stone and snow, especially as it was three in the afternoon, and I had neither eaten nor drunk anything since the morning; but to my surprise my suggestion met with a unanimous and energetic protest from the Tibetan guides and the *kerekeshi*.

"We can't spare the time," they cried with one voice. "We must push on to Karaul Davan before nightfall."

"What pass is that?" I asked in astonishment. "Nobody has told me anything about any more passes!"

"It is a very high pass and dangerous in the dark," they replied. "To-night we must get down into the Nubra valley," said the guide.

This unexpected pass turned out to be the most impressive I have ever seen; if it is not the most dangerous, it caused by far the greatest strain on my nerves owing to the terrific height of the abyss, and its gloomy splendour. It could serve as a model for a scene illustrating the gateway into the other world, and, in fact, it did bring me into another world, new and strange to me, fairy-like and highly original.

Some little distance beyond the stream, the ravine narrows still more, being almost closed by a huge wall of granite, all polished by some ancient glacier. This shut us in on three sides, and seemed to rise to heaven, where it vanished in the clouds. In front of us was only a crevice which split it from top to bottom. This crevice clearly led down to the infernal regions, a bottomless pit into which the river hurled itself with a roar and was lost to sight. I stood in mute admiration. My next throught was, "Where can the road go now? Where can we ride? Can the path go up that smooth granite wall where we can scarcely see the top?" It seemed impossible, and I shrank from the idea of scaling that vertical cliff. I looked inquiringly at the Bhot guide. He pointed at the wall

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in silence, took the halter of the yak, and led it along a narrow ledge hanging over the brink of the abyss.

The deep roar of the river in the depths, the murky gorge between the monstrous cliffs, which seemed to crush and overwhelm us by their measureless height, the narrowness of the ledge along which my yak was creeping, brought to my mind again and again the pictures and descriptions of hell which I had read and pondered over as a child in *The Divine Comedy*. It was the very reproduction, in fact, of the scene where Gustave Doré shows Virgil leading Dante into hell over a fearful, smoking pit. Only in real life this Karaul Davan was grander and far more terrible. Dante at least drew a path that was horizontal, but here it wound over the bulging rock, now up, now down. Of course, I had full faith in my Bhot Virgil, who went slowly swinging on in front, but I had also entrusted my life to the yak, in whose legs I had greater confidence than in my own.

Higher and still higher climbed the yak up the face of that cliff. There were no more bulges, and the track began to zigzag where cut by men. Below I could see the whole caravan stretched out as though on a stairway, looking like flies on the face of the cliff. If a stone were loosened by the feet of my yak it might easily kill a man or a beast beneath. We reached a dizzy height above the gorge, which made my head giddy when I looked down into the ravine, already plunged in darkness, yet our narrow ledge continued to rise high and ever higher. Something happened in the caravan, and the guide made his way back to help. My yak, left without his leader, began to hesitate, and walked with uncertain steps, as though unwillingly. It was impossible to guide him with the halter. Like horses and mules, yaks have a habit of preferring the very edge of the narrowest mountain paths when on one side there is the face of the cliff and on the other a precipice. I suppose the explanation is that they

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feel the weight of a man or load upon their backs, and instinctively fear bumping against the wall, which might cause them to stumble or fall over the abyss.

We went on climbing. It was a fine sensation, hanging, with my yak, not over a precipice, but absolutely in the air; for now the gulch, the cliffs, and everything else had been left below us.

There was a bend in the path, and I came on to a cairn of stones with some bits of rags on a stick stuck into the top. This was an *obo*, the top of the pass. The custom of putting *obos* at notable spots is a very old one. There are plenty of them in Turkestan and in the Kirghiz steppes, where they are called by the same name. The air resounded with the melodious cheers of the Bhoti. We had reached the top in safety.

The panorama was indescribable. The valley of the Nubra lay at our feet. Behind us, to the right and to the left, nothing. All around us, only air. We stood above everything. Beneath, only a layer of clouds, far below us, covering everything. Straight in front, the vertical cliff dropped sheer down to that mysterious depth, out of which rose a splendid crest, higher than ourselves, its top clad in snow and ice.

That huge surface is cut by deep, dark cracks, which go down, down, down, and at their base divide into little green and yellow triangular patches and narrow bands. It is hard to imagine that this is a talus of debris, a vast scree washed out of the ravine by river action and covered with vegetation. At the very bottom I could see a narrow, grey band. That was the river Nubra. Up here, on this eagle's crag, there blew a piercing wind. I felt as though I had no weight, as if the wind would pick me up, yak and all, whirl us round like a leaf in the air, and carry us off into space.

Suddenly I felt that I must get down there as quickly as possible. The way down was a gigantic staircase cut in the

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face of the rock. How many thousands of feet down it was I did not attempt to determine, but the descent took us an hour and three-quarters; that is to say, it was about five miles!

The face of the cliff was so sheer that nothing was visible more than a few feet ahead, only the bottom of the valley in the far distance, and you felt every moment that you must go crashing down. I rode my yak half-way down and then walked. The whole descent is down the face of that cliff; the path is partly cut out of the living rock, and in places laid on buttresses. This immense stairway reflects the greatest honour upon the English engineer who constructed it forty years before. Previously the road had followed along the crest of the mountain and dropped into the valley at a great distance away.

At the bottom we crossed the river on a Tibetan bridge, fixed on huge boulders. Here, on a green, open space we saw great black yaks grazing, belonging to a caravan from Lhasa, stopping to bivouac. We pitched camp alongside. It grew dark. It was warm. I felt a wave of contentment come over me, a great calm and peace of mind, a feeling of *bien-être*. The air was balmy and pleasant; breathing was easy. Sitting on a big stone, I drank my tea with genuine pleasure, for now once more it had its own flavour and aroma. Gradually ordinary human feelings returned to me, reviving from the coma in which they had been plunged during the passage through the clouds.

A gentle breeze wafted up from somewhere the fragrance of sage. I heard the *caravanbash* round the camp fire teaching the Bhoti how to be polite and respectful to Europeans, but to my mind the boot should have been on the other leg, for the poor Bhoti were quite capable of giving lessons in manners themselves.

That night I slept as I had not slept for ages.

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CHAPTER X

THE WONDERFUL NUBRA VALLEY

THE next morning was sunny and bright and the air fresh and still. The locality was interesting. Sheer and lofty granite walls behind us raised their heads into the clouds, and snowy peaks could just be discerned here and there behind them. Below, a wall of glacial deposits surrounded us in a half-circle, cut in one place by the roaring torrent, which rolled boulders great and small along its bottom as it hurtled down the valley. It was impossible to see whence this stream rises, where and how it makes its way out of the granite bastion, which looks entire and unbroken. At length, on careful investigation, I found on the right in a corner, a narrow winding cleft, where bubbled running water. Clearly, there had at one time been an ice-fall here, when the ancient glacier filled the valley of Tutailiak. It deposited its moraines and then gradually ate back a narrow, winding cleft in the granite. Who knows what is going on within that gloomy gulch in the heart of the living mountain?

We moved off at eight. Here again I mounted my horse, and after two days on a creature that reminded me more of a brown bear than of a cow I felt how fine it was to be on the back of a good horse once more. The warm sun, the clear blue sky, the easy, well-laid road with towering crests on either side, the novelty of the scene, all contributed to put me in a contented frame of mind. I looked round with a keen interest in my surroundings, and there is plenty to see and observe in the interesting valley of the Nubra. This small but well-defined region forms part of Western Tibet, cut off from the rest of the world by ice-bound mountain ranges. Although it lies right on a frequented

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caravan route, it has not lost its highly individual character inherited through millennia.

We rode round the mountain through a valley crowded with great blocks of granite with fresh sharp edges, just as though broken off recently by some gigantic geological hammer, running to several hundred tons each. The surface of some was covered with desert sunburn, others fresh and new with sharp corners and edges: evidently a recent fall.

The valley of the Nubra itself is not fertile. Its bottom is covered with gravel, sand, or shingle, the flanks are vertical walls of granite. But where the streams come out of the gorges and artificial irrigation has been organized, fields have been cleared of stones, walled, and sown. Every inch of soil and every drop of water is made use of and nothing allowed to go to waste. When places which are a mass of stones or sand are irrigated, wild vegetation appears. Here I found a fine green turf, *Stipa*, sage, briar, *Nitraria*, tamarisk, and other shrubs. Even these wild places are taken care of; they too are surrounded by stone walls or fences of dried branches of thorns. Sometimes living hedges of briar are thickly covered with clematis, which appears here again in profusion and covers the fences, walls, and even trees, with a blanket of its white down. The path is a lane winding capriciously among these walls, fields, and diminutive gardens; sometimes it is very stony and even has steps in it, and crosses brooks and the irrigation canals. Everything is neat and clean, and obviously taken care of; there are neither weeds nor dirt nor rubbish. Small patches of turf are carefully walled in and protected, a miniature pasture for miniature sheep to graze in. In the little gardens there are the simple sorts of trees and flowers, willows, poplars and apricots. In all the gardens and corners there are white *chortens*, looking like big marble vases among the green. Things here are modest, simple, even poor, but it is a careful, industrious, dignified, and even

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noble poverty. Nature is mean and harsh, but the folk who have their humble homes here are hard-working, temperate, and have taste; they love and cherish the little she gives them. It is typical that a huge granite boulder lying alongside the road is covered with neatly engraved inscriptions, the sacred formula of the Tibetans, *Om mane padme hum*, O Treasure in the Lotus Flower! On every side it is the same, all the rocks near the road and the villages, all the big stones, are engraved with the inscription. We rode past some long, prismatic, rectangular constructions like tomb-stones, but 20 feet or more in length and 4 or 5 feet high called *mané*. Their upper surface is covered with quantities of stones, rocks, boulders, and slabs of schist, all engraved with this sacred formula. The hands of devout monks never grow weary of adorning the lifeless stone with their engraving *ex voto*, acknowledging the blessing of the great Gautama Buddha for the scanty gifts of nature.

Presently we met a female figure on the road. She was extraordinarily picturesque, and I felt sure that her costume must have been designed by an artist for some opera. Her face was swarthy, of the Turki type, her little eyes like black cherries, on her head a broad head-dress in the form of a cobra falling down her back in a narrow band; this was all decorated with turquoises; beneath it hung locks of hair black as tar, which seemed to fuse with the flaps of black sheepskin. A girdle round the waist of her long, dark red robe showed up her slender figure, and on her back there was the skin of a kid with the fur outside. This is the invariable costume of all women, great or small, in this district, from early morning till late at night. No woman would dream of going out, even for a minute, to draw water or work in the gardens without putting on her full costume, least of all without the turquoise head-dress. I did not even see little girls of six or eight without the complete outfit. A

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little girl curtsied to me very politely, lowering her hands, and clapping her white shell bangles together.

A strange sound arose in the air and faded away, as though coming from a silver trumpet. It was repeated again and again, sounding as though it came from the sides of the hills, rising and dying away in the still air. It was very melodious and in keeping with this strange valley, the wonderful air and clear blue sky, and thin, fleecy clouds, free from the dusty haze of Central Asia. This music was the call to prayer of the lamas. High up in the ravine or on the top of the cliffs may be seen lofty buildings of peculiar design with balconies on the upper floor and there lamas standing in the yellow or red robes of their caste, with very long copper trumpets like the one figured in drawings of the Archangel Gabriel.

In the fields one can see little prayer-houses decorated with long flags with prayers written on them; the wind blows the flags about, so the prayers mount into the air. In the canals and brooks there are little miniature water-wheels, running the prayer drums, which never cease turning, sending forth the prayers of their maker.

By a narrow path, hanging between stone walls and thorn hedges plaited from climbing plants, we rode into the village of Panamik, a group of houses with little gardens and courtyards.

The houses of the Bhot are miniature, like everything else in this enchanted land, horses, cattle, sheep, even the fields. They are small, but high, of several stories, with peculiar, high roofs. They are very neatly built of well-trimmed stone, the walls smooth and even, with little windows with quaintly carved wooden grilles instead of glass. Inside it is gloomy and dark, with but cold comfort in the bare stone walls and scanty furniture; a simple life unchanged these thousand years.

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In their clean little yards they were now threshing barley, the chief food product of the people. The threshing-floor, hardly bigger than a small dining-table, was so polished and bright that not a grain could be lost on it. During the threshing the Bhot drives his animal round and round with a peculiar and melodious air and sings a special threshing song. There are no wild, harsh cries to be heard in this peaceful, industrious land, only melodious, musical sounds which, with that of the prayer-trumpets, are to be heard the live-long day. In the simple but pleasant aspect of Nature they soothe the body and soul of the wayfarer, bringing him rest, peace, and repose, after the toil and hardships of the road.

For this reason, Panamik is used as a rest-camp for caravans coming from Lhasa or Yarkand. Besides, I have not yet exhausted the charms of this little place. Beneficent Nature or some good fairy has endowed this delightful valley with hot mineral springs for baths which have an extraordinarily refreshing effect; what could be more appropriate for the exhausted traveller?

At the entrance to the village we were met by a polite young man in a red cap who took us into the field where we were to camp. To let us in he simply pulled down a part of the brick wall. The whole field was covered with a short, close, green grass like English turf, and in the corner, under a huge willow, stood a white *chorten:* here was growing *Perovskia*, which resembles lavender when in flower, its Russian name carrying my thoughts back to my homeland.

Our horses stood under the trees, evidently pleased with their surroundings and relieved to be at the end of their exhausting journey. My tent was pitched in a space near the stone wall. A field kitchen was set up under the shade of a huge apricot tree, and lunch prepared at once, which I was awaiting impatiently. For we were now in a land of

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wonders, that heals the sick, awakens appetite and the appreciation of good things and various blessings of life.

And in truth I wanted a little healing. My lower lip was covered with sores, the upper with excrescences and suffused with blood-blisters; the whole of the right side of my face ached desperately, and my hands were covered with deep cracks. Several members of the caravan were in the same plight as I, and others were complaining of terrible headaches.

A great eagle was circling over our heads and the chattering of magpies, a half-forgotten sound, mingled with the piping of the choughs. The Nubra babbled on the other side of the wall. In the far distance the mountain peaks and snow seemed covered with a delicate blue haze of distance. Beyond the stream, high up on the slope of the lofty and barren mountain, beside a spring a little white house peeped out in a tiny garden. How do people get there? They must climb like flies. The Tibetans have it in the blood. They seem to love climbing high rocks, always striving the nearer to heaven. Their monasteries are always perched on the highest places, often enough on barely accessible cliffs; even their dwelling-houses, quite unnecessarily, are often built on the edge of a cliff. By four o'clock the sun had gone behind a lofty ridge and our valley was in shadow. A lama came to visit our camp, wearing a strange horned hat, a dark red cloak, with the inevitable spindle and thread in his hands, ragged and dirty. All the clothing of the Tibetans is made of wool, and the men never cease spinning. But neither the clothing nor the men themselves are ever washed, or rather, the men are washed only twice in their lives, after birth and after death. The Bhot always looked on with astonishment at my toilet, when I washed with hot water and soap. It is surprising that they can reconcile their own personal dirt with the

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cleanness of their houses, yards and gardens, of everything they have, and the undoubted aesthetic sense and taste with which they chose pleasing views and aspects for their homes.

In the evening a caravan arrived from India and camped near us. The owner came to call on me. He was a picturesque person in a high sheepskin hat with big gold ear-rings and legs, thin as rods, in puttees and slippers. He had come from Leh in three days. He was resting a day here, but would push on then, as by ten days time the cold on the Karakoram would be unendurable.

He told me that the pass of Kardong on the near side of Leh was in good condition, and gave me a handsome present, a cabbage fresh from Leh, a valuable addition to our provisions, as it was a long time since we had had fresh vegetables. All the Indians we met on the road were very courteous and kind.

Night fell. The moon lit up the snow on the lofty peaks and the sky remained deep blue all through the night. The old trees in the gardens, the rocky slopes near by, the silvery band of the river, all were bathed in a mysterious twilight. The white *chorten*, in the bright rays of the moon, stood out against the sombre green background. After the unpeopled, lifeless mountain deserts, what a change it was to be in this strange world, so new and unfamiliar to me, unlike anything I had yet seen, totally different from the other lands of this part of Asia. The traveller going from the Indian side approaches it gradually, passing through Ladak and Tibet, and so is not so struck by the charm of the Nubra valley as he who comes down from the north over the mountain deserts.

All this valley, its natural splendour, its beauty, its simple nature, its originality, picturesque aspect, civility and simplicity of its inhabitants, their dignified poverty, their remarkable industry, their contentment and *joie de*

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vivre, produced on me an unforgettable impression. It seemed to me that I was seeing in real life before my eyes some fairyland, where everybody was poor and good. If some poet wanted to sing of a land of such ideal virtues, or an artist to illustrate a story of a good fairy and her poor but hard-working people, he could not do better than pay a visit to the valley of the Nubra, where he would find his model in real life.

The Bhots look after their fields as though on a model farm; they very carefully pick up all the stones and use them for making the walls; the ground is levelled like a table and every inch of soil made use of. I took a great fancy to these Bhots on account of their unflagging industry and love of nature and animals. They take great care of their trees, of their few shrubs, of their very grass. Involuntarily, I could not resist comparing them with our Russian *mujik*, who has an unlimited expanse of the most fertile soil in the world, and yet manages to starve on it. In the Nubra valley, where the Bhot flourishes, sings, and laughs through life and maintains thirty per cent of the population doing nothing but pray, a Russian *mujik* would die of hunger. In a single farmyard of a Semirechie peasant, chock-full of muck for the greater part of the year, a whole family of Bhots would live, feed, and be happy.

It would be harder to find a more cruel exterminator of nature than the Russian peasant. The saying attributed to Attila, who was a Kirghiz, that grass will not grow where his horse had trod, is applied by the Kirghiz to-day to the Russian peasant. He destroys forests, spoils and dries up rivers and lakes, exterminates birds, beasts, and fishes, converts a smiling and prosperous district into a desert. I know his handiwork too well: I have seen it in Semirechie and elsewhere.

How far from him is the Bhot, who protects a briar or

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other shrub with a wall of stone and fences in a few square feet of grass near a little spring!

A noise in the camp awoke me before dawn. I took a lantern and went out, to find a group of men gathered round the body of my *caravanbash's* dying horse. It was a handsome stallion from Ferghaná, with good manners and well broken. It was groaning heavily, lying on its side, breathing stertorously, with foam on its lips. Evidently it had eaten some aconite when coming down the vale of glaciers. Really it does seem as though some evil spirit does all in his power to ward off man from the fairyland of the Nubra, as though some curse lay like a blight on that awful *via dolorosa* of the caravan animals.

The morning was overcast, and a light mist extended down the valley, and the peaks were tipped with cloud. The air was still and mild. While I was having breakfast the sun came out. An immense Tibetan dog came to pay me a visit. There were plenty of them in the lanes; they are quiet and friendly, with long, silky coat. They are quite good watchdogs, but do not attack strangers at sight like the Kirghiz dogs, nor do they bark all night. It is evident that the Tibetans are fond of their dogs and treat them well.

White wagtails turned up too, our constant companions on the road; some tits were twittering about in the bushes, and a big flock of sparrows settled on the shrubs; these were not the so-called Indian sparrow, *Passer indicus*, which is the common kind in Turkestan, but was more like the European tree sparrow, *P. montanus*. Goats like toys were grazing in the fields, and cows that looked like calves.

When the mist dispersed I rode up to have a look at the hot springs. A Bhot showed me the way, all in rags, with a shirt full of holes, but with silver ear-rings in his ears and golden bangles on his right wrist. The hot springs issue from

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the granite; they have a high temperature, and contain a solution of soda, which is precipitated at once. The rock underneath, corroded by the spring, has a friable, spongy structure and is full of soda. Farther down the Nubra there are big deposits of soda, which the natives gather and sell. They use it in making tea. It is hard to say whether these springs arise in the granite itself or are deep-seated waters bringing up soda from some other rock, decomposing the granite in their passage through it.

Green grass grows along the stream, and a water-weed in it, causing the precipitation of iron, with the result that the course of these mineral waters is marked out in bright white, yellow, red, and green colours. In some places steam issues from crevices in the rocks.

From one of the springs the water is conducted to a primitive bath made of stone surrounded by a stone wall. Alongside is a two-story building, also of stone and of primitive structure, for the use of those who come to take the baths. I took one and enjoyed it immensely, blessing the good fairy of this enchanted valley for providing this luxury for the wayfarer.

Numbers of pretty little lizards, grey with bright orange necks, scuttle about the rocks like living flowers.

The evening of that day was very enjoyable. After my bath, I sat for a long time in the garden near my tent, drinking tea and enjoying the scenery. The sun had already gone behind the mountain. The apricot trees had put on the golden and purple tints of autumn, a striking contrast to the dark green of the thorns and bright green of the willows. Big trees and the hedges were covered with the fluffy flowers of clematis. A funny little white kid came and stood up on its hind legs to browse the berries of fragrant and pleasantly acid berries of the thorns.

The white *chortens* in the dusk had a weird unearthly

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look, speaking of some strange cult. Everything was still and peaceful..

Suddenly there was a commotion, the noise of bells, neighing of horses, and cries in an unknown tongue. This was the arrival of a caravan from Kashmir, which camped in an adjoining field. The heavily laden horses filed into the field, looking cheerful enough at the rest before them. Indians in yellow turbans were sitting on big pack-saddles. My horse began to get excited, lifted up his neck and tail and neighed vigorously to greet the arrivals from a far country. Two bright blue spots showed themselves over the neighbouring wall, with swarthy young faces beneath them, surrounded by a tangle of black curls. Three young Bhot girls were inquisitive and having a peep at the strangers.

The next morning we tore ourselves away from Panamik, and in the afternoon came to Tagar, the biggest village in the valley. Tagar in the Kashgar dialect means bag or pouch. It seemed odd that a number of the Bhots here spoke Turki, in the Kashgar fashion, of course. The sky was overcast, clouds lowered over the valley discharging sleet, but later on it cleared up and turned warm.

The road followed a sandy and gravelly valley where only *Nitraria* was growing; it has a somewhat different appearance here than farther north; the leaves are shortened and cylindrical as in *Salsola*, the branches fewer, and the whole plant looked as though striving for height. From a pool we flushed a flock of teal. Then we rode through another large village, without seeing a soul in the streets, and then we climbed the mountain slope high above the valley, crossed a brook and through a broad thicket of sea buck-thorn which here formed a regular forest.

We pitched camp on an open grassy space surrounded by the usual wall. Coveys of chukar bustled about quite unconcerned, even in the lanes of the village, just like

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domestic fowl. The Bhots do not touch them, and they seem to like the neighbourhood of man. Who could raise a hand, or rather a gun, on such a confiding game?

The village is situated on the slope of a hill on the eastern side of the valley, watered by the stream which flows out of the mountain higher up. It is tapped there for an irrigation canal, and taken to a monastery in the usual Tibetan style of a high trapezium with quaint balconies, perched high above the village. Lit up now in the direct rays of the setting sun, the white monastery buildings looked imposing against the background of the granite. On both sides white spots were scattered about the hillside, cells of hermits.

Down below, in a shaded garden, surrounded by high trees, stood a tall, narrow, stone building with small windows. the house of the owner of the garden where we camped. On the roof were carefully tied up and arranged bundles of straw and hay, twined into thick plaits. In our garden, under the shade of the tall willows, stood a big white *chorten.* There are numerous others scattered about the gardens and mountain sides, as well as many *manés.*

In the yard they were threshing wheat. They do not reap it here, but pull it up by the roots. It ripens up to an altitude of 12,000 feet, but barley to 15,000. Roast barley meal, *satu*, with meat and tea form the chief food of the Bhots. It is not too bad to eat.

We saw a lot of women here, of all ages and classes. The fair sex among the Bhots is not distinguished either for good looks or cleanliness, and, of course, does not wash. Young and old, rich and poor, without exception, at least in this district, wore the cobra-shaped head-dress with decoration, usually of turquoise, but sometimes with other stones. When, and by what route did this secluded corner of the mountain masses of Asia inherit this custom of the pharaohs,

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of wearing in the head-dress the sacred emblem of the cobra?

This lack of personal hygiene makes the cleanness of their homes the more surprising, and it is the same with their yards, gardens, and streets. There was no rubbish nor dirt to be seen, no litter, no mixens, nor the heaps of compost that are so disgusting in Kashgaria. Certainly here in Ladak there is none of the notorious filth of the East, which is so unpleasant in China and Central Asia. I have used the word "fairy-like" for the valley of the Nubra really because it seems too good to be true, that it is a real country and not a scene on the stage. It is consoling to think that in the twentieth century it is still possible to ride on horseback through little-known lands that have preserved their own original culture, the inheritance of ages, and shun everything that is European, with its levelling civilization.

Here at Tagar the Nubra falls into the Shyok, which we saw last at Sasser-la. The Shyok encircles the massive of Sasser and flows from east to west, back into the mountains of Baltistan. In winter, when there is little water in it, it freezes, so one can ride along it, thus avoiding the pass over Sasser-la, Karaul Davan, and the valley of the Nubra.

The valley of the Shyok is broad here, covered with gravels or sand, which in places forms big *barkhans* or big dunes, in others covered with thorn thickets and tamarisk, the latter sometimes developed into quite big trees; there are swampy patches and villages with their fields watered by artificial canals. We rode through one such village at mid-day, all hidden in the shade of huge trees. The streets were very shady and picturesque from the big small-leaved willows, and the first *karagach* trees, a kind of elm, that I had seen since Kök Yar, and the big white *chortens* like watch-towers.

Beyond this village the valley is sterile and stony, but

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livens up farther along, when the valley drops down to a suspension bridge of European construction, the first sign of civilization; it is slung on six steel cables high over the stream, supported by two high stone arches. As the leader of the caravan stepped on to the bridge he was stopped by the keeper in the form of a perfectly hideous Bhot woman, dressed in full Tibetan style, with the cobra head-dress studded with turquoise, dark red cloak and sheepskin on the shoulders.

Strange to say, my horse, which had not hesitated a moment at the most dizzy precipices and nerve-racking, crazy native bridges, shied at this product of modern engineering. The reason is that native bridges swing only in a vertical plane, with no lateral motion at all, while these skilfully constructed European bridges have a marked horizontal sway, and in the middle the horse stumbles and reels as though drunk, especially if carrying a rider or a load which increases the amplitude of the swing. I had to dismount to lead him over.

Beyond the bridge the road follows the bank of the river under a steep cliff of granite and glacial deposits. The road is well made, but often covered with falls of rock, and here and there great masses hung, ready to come crashing down to overwhelm the passer-by. The road is very sandy and the going was heavy for the horses. On the right there gaped a huge amphitheatre in the breast of the mountains, all covered with trees with a brook in the middle, and a huge monastery building high up at the back. This was Kartsa, our camp for the night.

Beneath, level places and terraced fields, green on every side, trees and shrubs. We pitched camp on the bank of the stream overgrown with bushes, in a field near the ruins of some old stone building with numerous rooms. A few very old apple-trees were growing near it, some with huge

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cavities in them growing with many branches out of a single root. This old orchard could not be less than a hundred years old. Who had lived in this huge old house, and when? Who could have planted this orchard in this remote spot, an oasis in the mountains?

Splendid weather set in. The day was still, the sky cloudless. It was hot. Flies began to tease. Here in the valley of the Shyok we saw white-winged redstarts, which we had not seen in the Vale of Glaciers, nor in the Nubra; that means that these beautiful little birds fly down the valley of the Shyok, avoiding the icy altitudes of Sasser-la and the valley of the Nubra. A Bhot brought me some quite good apples, the first fruit I had eaten on this side of the mountains. Nature was richer here than in the Nubra. High poplars with golden foliage surrounded the meadow where our tents were pitched. The river murmured past the verdure of the old willows and pink tints of the tamarisk.

On all sides round us were glacial remains. High above us stood the monastery, standing out in red and white, like some old country seat, a snow-capped peak towering behind it. The sun was just setting behind it and our valley was enveloped in shadow, while the peaks on the far side of the Shyok were bathed in red and gold. It grew dark. The moon came out from behind the mountains of the Shyok. Venus, Mars, and Jupiter twinkled brilliantly, in one line. A delightful, warm, still night began, such as I had not seen for many a long day. This pleasant corner among the rocky mountain masses lulled me to a sweet slumber. The great monastery building looked strange and mysterious in the white moonlight. The lights of our camp fires began to sparkle. This was to be the last of our camps in a warm, green valley. To-morrow once more barren mountains, rocks and the glacier of Kardong awaited us.

In the morning we rode a long time down the valley of

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the Shyok, most of the time on ledges high above the river. Here we met for the first time an artificial road in the form of vertical walls fixed to the sheer face of the cliffs, extending for miles. Where such a passage crosses a crevasse or a rift in the rock, we had to ride along the top of the wall, sometimes very high, and there is the choice of falling, horse and all, on one side or the other. Such a track makes one giddy, but luckily horses do not feel it, so the rider keeps to the golden rule of the cavalryman and looks between the ears of the horse. It is still worse when the passage passes under an overhanging rock, as a tall man on a high horse simply could not get through. Unless you have the most perfect confidence in your animal, it is better to go on foot in places like that.

Up the valley of a stream falling into the Shyok we turned to the right, and here began our ascent to the pass of Kardong, that is, the first ridge of the Himalayas on the road to the valley of the Indus. Beneath, the ravine is overgrown with trees and shrubs, among which I could distinguish some huge tamarisks with trunks over a foot thick. I thoroughly enjoyed riding through this perfectly wild piece of woodland. The higher we went, the thinner the forest; the trees shorter and smaller, the stream reduced to a mere brook, and where the road turns into a lateral ravine, we entered the alpine zone once more. We passed the ruins of some old building like a caravanserai, surrounded by old *chortens*. By this valley we came out on to the village of Kardong. The high ground hangs over a deep valley, the sides of which are artificially terraced for crops of barley and hay. Far below we could see yaks grazing, looking like little black ants. In the distance a monastery could be seen.

The village of Kardong consists of a few wretched stone houses, *chortens*, a few round buildings of some sort, and a big caravanserai surrounded by a high stone wall where we

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rode in. The extensive yard was piled with merchandise, the travellers rooms dark, cold and dirty, so I gave orders to have my tent pitched in the yard, which half a dozen Bhots did smartly under the direction of a seventh. In the middle of the yard was a clump of willows, entirely surrounded by a stone wall without opening. In the middle of the yard was a pile of old weights and a yoke, reminding me of the old bazaars in our villages. To complete the resemblance a *saraiman* stood by the weights, that is, superintendent of the caravanserai, a Bhot, but fair, with a face like a Tartar Cossack. We arrived about midday and after lunch I went to have a look round the neighbourhood.

The sky was blue, cloudless; it was hot in the sun, but in the evening a breeze sprang up from the snowfields and made it cold.

Near the *ravat* or caravanserai there were three round stone buildings with roofs of slabs of schist engraved with inscriptions. On the walls prayer-drums. On every side stone walls; they enclose the corn ricks of barley or hay and support the terraced slopes of the mountain sides. On the brook I saw a greenshank, *Totanus ochropus*, and flushed a stint, *Tringa temminckii*; countless sparrows flew about the yard and a few redstarts.

The women, who here too wore turquoise decorations on their head-dress, superintended the threshing of the barley. The grain here is very big, without envelope and of excellent quality; it is known as the Himalayan barley.

All the fields are irrigated artificially, which seems strange in so high a place, for we were at 13,000 feet, which shows how little precipitation there is in this part of the Himalayas where the snow line here rises to 20,000 feet.

Far around could be seen a sea of mountains, the greater part barren and desert, inaccessible and snowy. Granite is

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the dominant type of rock, with gneiss, but I came across pieces of coarse crystalline diorite.

The evening drew on. The moon came out. The pleasant chanting of the lamas resounded from the monastery, the evening summons to prayer.

I must return to camp. To-morrow would be the last of the difficult passes, the snow-covered glacier of Kardong at 17,570 feet, no mean altitude for a pass.

We did not succeed in getting over the pass the next day. We crossed some fields and climbed high up ancient moraines and over a patch of peat with some springs, the source of the river, and had to stop at the foot of the pass, where there was a little stone hut, a shelter for belated wayfarers.

A strong wind sprang up and it turned very cold, as a blizzard whirled round the pass. The Bhoti declared that it was impossible to go any farther, and that we must stay where we were till the next day. I was not sorry, as the yak I was riding was rather weak and went so slowly that I began to doubt whether he would carry me over the pass successfully. As a matter of fact, it was not a real yak, but a *zho*, or cross between a yak and domestic cattle, which are generally preferred for riding on account of their quieter manners, but, of course, they have not the strength of the true yaks. Well-bred yaks are often very big brutes, with small horns, massive heads and dark brown hair. When being ridden over the snow, yaks carry the head low and often pick up a mouthful of snow and utter the characteristic grunt that has earned its scientific name *Bos grunniens*. The cross does not eat snow, nor does it grunt, but grinds its teeth in a queer manner.

We were already at a good altitude, above 16,000 feet, which was quite appreciable, and the symptoms of mountain sicknesses manifested themselves again, fatigue, the nasty

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taste in the mouth, loss of appetite, and tea once more was like an unpleasant medicine, just as on the Karakoram. The night was very cold. I awoke feeling suffocated, but by arranging the pillow so as to prop my head up higher was able to sleep.

We were up very early, before the break of dawn. I took eight drops of strophanthus and felt no ill effects from the rise.

The pass of Kardong-la consists of an enormous cirque filled with a glacier, just like a great crater of a volcano with one side broken down. The glacier plunges straight down the cliff. To reach it it is necessary to climb up the flank of the mountain, crawl round the edge of the cirque and then follow a lateral moraine. It is very hard on both yaks and horses. The road follows down the left wall on ice-covered boulders, stones, and rocks, on icy steps, almost sheer in places, just like the steps of a steep and broken stairway. The animals keep slipping and falling. I was now riding a huge great yak, a very powerful beast, but even he came down two or three times. Once when he fell and rolled, I was only just able to jump clear in time. Fortunately, he did not roll far, but quickly recovered his feet and stood up again, but if he had gone only a little way farther he must have slid down the steep surface of the snow and rolled over into the abyss, over the nose of the glacier. In winter-time, like this, when the surface of the ice is covered with a thick layer of snow, there is no particular danger in going on to it, but I cannot imagine what they do here in summer, when the stones are not held in the grip of the ice, streams flow about the glacier and the whole thing is a mass of crevices and cracks.

When we had reached the top of the moraine, we had to cross the glacier through the deep snow and climb up its left flank to the top of the pass. Here the animals sank an

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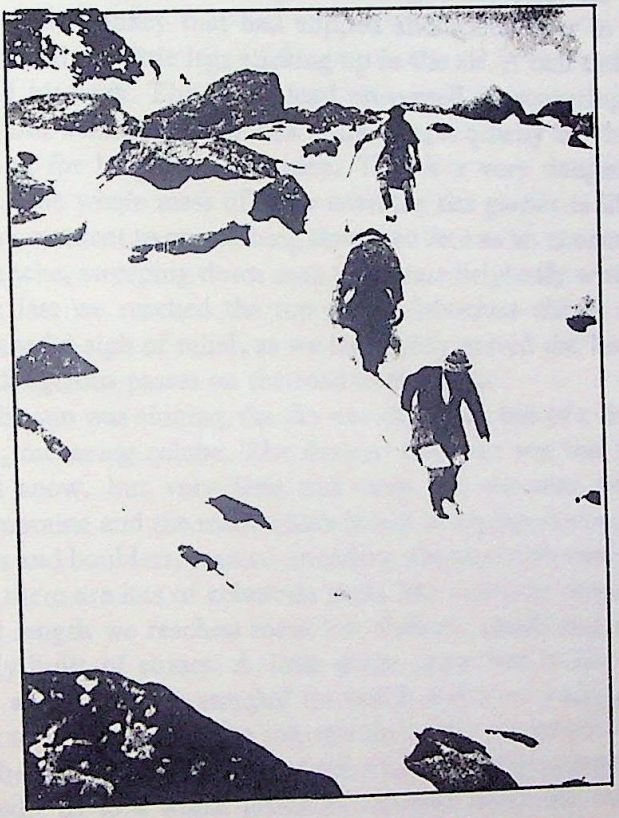

ON THE PASS

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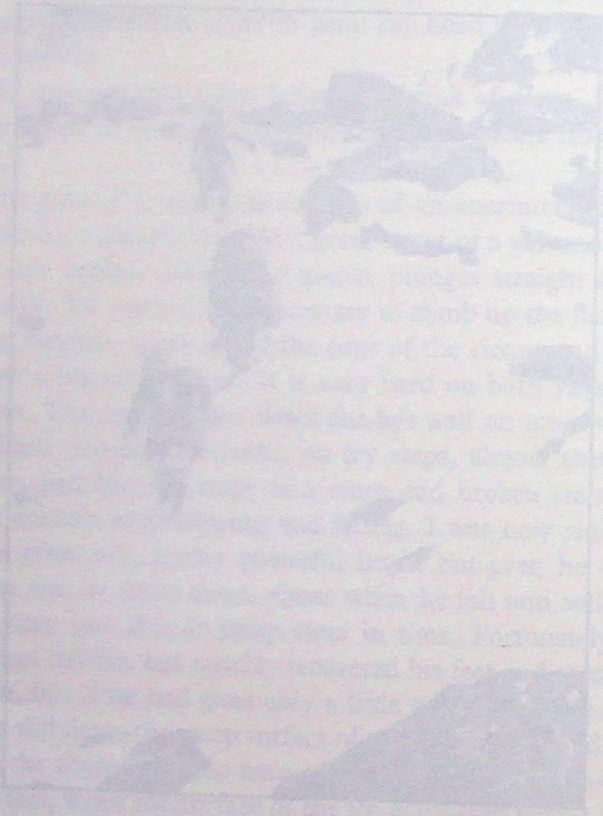

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floundered in the soft, deep snow that had fallen during the night. We met a party of Bhoti with donkeys laden with goods from Leh to Kardong. I was frightfully sorry for one poor little donkey that had slipped and rolled over in the snow, with its little legs sticking up in the air. A bell tinkled round his neck. The heavy load prevented it recovering its feet and, with a resigned look in its eyes, it quietly lay there, waiting for help from the men. This is a very dangerous spot. The whole mass of snow covering the glacier is likely at any moment to go crashing down the face as an enormous avalanche, sweeping down man and beast helplessly with it.

At last we reached the top of our laborious climb, and breathed a sigh of relief, as we had safely passed the last of the dangerous passes on the road to Kashmir.

The sun was shining, the sky was cloudless, but of a deep, dark, menacing colour. The descent from the top was free from snow, but very long and steep, all the time down the moraine and the road, which is laid in zigzags among the rocks and boulders, seemed unending. On the crest, near the top, there are lots of columnar rocks like druidical remains.

At length we reached some low shelters, partly dug-out, partly built of stones. A little green grass was to be seen here and there. We stopped for lunch and then I changed back to my horse, as the yak was no longer necessary.

The road, still very stony, down a narrow valley, presently brought us to a whole group of *chortens*. Here the valley makes an abrupt bend to the left, exposing a fine view of terraced hillsides, orchards, gardens, monasteries on the hills, groups of *chortens*, one in the foreground resembling a church in size and shape. The mountains around are barren and stony.

We rode farther down still and came out into wooded plantations at the mouth of the valley, which here joins the broad vale of the Indus, running from east to west. To the

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left of the road a steep, rocky mountain rears itself, with a cluster of *chortens* at its foot and numbers of the strange, tall, narrow Tibetan houses, and along the crest of the mountain there are ancient fortifications, lamaseries, and, at the end, on an eminence a huge, high, gloomy building with narrow window-openings, in which it was not difficult to recognize what I had so often seen in illustrations and photographs, the ancient castle or palace of the former ruler of Little Tibet. Clustered round the foot of the hill was a township. This was Leh!

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CHAPTER XI

LEH . . . AND DOWN THE INDUS

We rode in through the city gates. The *caravanbash*, impressed by the strangeness of his surroundings, decided to walk, so he dismounted and strode on at the head of the caravan. We rode through the main street, past some European houses with gardens full of flowers and the walls covered with a fluffy clematis, then an open grassy space among stones, from which bubble spring waters. Finally, we rode into a wide courtyard, shaded with old willows and poplars, now yellow and purple with the tints of autumn. In the middle of the courtyard there is a large and comfortable bungalow, where we stopped.

The day was warm and sunny. The arrival at the town, the possibility of having a real bath, and of being in a house again after several weeks of tent-life in gale, snow, and rock, all combined to produce a delightful feeling of comfort and content.

Woodsellers made their appearance at once, and women brought fodder for the horses. A couple of little girls put in an appearance, about eleven or twelve years of age, wearing the regular costume with the turquoise cobra on the head and goatskin down the back, and began to sweep the rooms and put down carpets on the verandah. The bungalow consisted of several rooms, each with a toilet and bathroom. with a large dining-room in the middle with windows opening upwards. In all the rooms the chimneys and floors were covered with carpets of Indian make. I never expected to find such comfort in this little Tibetan township, least of all at such an altitude, for Leh is at 11,266 feet.

We had hardly unloaded the horses when a hairdresser

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and a washerwoman paid a call to offer their services. In the evening, after dinner, when I sat in my room in a comfortable armchair by the fireside, I felt that ordinary human feelings were coming back to me. The most difficult and dangerous part of the journey was over. Now I was in India under the British Government, in a land where there was law and order, the telegraph and post, real roads and, very characteristic, bungalows!

True, I still had a long way to travel yet, on horseback and at great heights, but there would be no more *tutek*, no more mountain sickness; there would be civilized conditions of travel; it would be possible to shave every day and even have a bath! In that warm room, on that soft bed, I fell asleep and slept the sleep of the just.

Next morning I was awakened and delighted by the sound of bells, a music I had not heard for five years, a music which brings back to all Russians, except of course the Bolsheviks, memories of past happiness, of our birthplace, of our happy family life, the brightest pictures of childhood, home, and holidays. These were the church bells of the Moravian Mission, conducting civilizing Christian work in Ladak. Through the open window and golden foliage of the trees I could see the bright blue sky and beams of the morning sun. The air was fresh and bracing.

It was Sunday. I received an invitation to lunch in the Moravian Mission. My kind hostess, Mrs. Kunig, showed me over her place, all the rooms and buildings of the Mission, the delightful garden, full of sweet peas, *Cosmia*, *Godetias*, and huge *Pelargonias* and many other flowers, a kitchen garden with various vegetables, where there actually grew strawberries, only recently introduced into this town among the clouds. From the window of the sitting-room there was a splendid panorama over the valley of the Indus,

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of the lofty crest beyond the river, with its snowy peaks and creeping glacier.

Lunch was delightful, the cooking perfect, including the broccoli and potatoes, which were delicious. Knowing how difficult it is to boil anything properly at an altitude of over 11,500 feet, I was so astonished that my hostess showed me the secret of her art. The entire dinner was cooked in a special apparatus, something like a Papin "digester," hermetically sealed, under the pressure of superheated steam, which at this altitude replaced normal atmospheric pressure. All the dishes were prepared by my hostess herself and put into the apparatus, which is screwed up and heated for a fixed time and then left until it is time to serve up. The food was excellent, and from start to finish was not touched by the hands of servants.

Now was the best time of the year in Ladak, October and November. In January and February it is very cold, sometimes colder inside the stone houses than outdoors. Spring begins late up here, the trees not breaking out before June.

The main street of Leh, planted with poplars, has been photographed many a time. I have seen pictures of it when the poplars were but saplings, and now they are well grown old trees, even gnarled. Really, it is too high for poplars here. They look after the trees and take care of them. At one place near the bazaar, the huge trunk of a big poplar is leaning across a lane, so they have put an iron support to hold it up. The shops in the bazaar are few and their wares not particularly interesting, but the traders can produce for approval various rare and curious things from Lhassa and some interesting antiques. I bought a very old porcelain cup in a copper box. A cup is the inseparable companion of every Tibetan, always to be found in his bosom, just as it used to be of the Scythians and, until quite recent times, of their descendants the Kirghiz.

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Poor people have simple goblets of wood; the better off, of wood mounted in silver, then all silver, then porcelain mounted in silver. Many lamas have cups made of the upper part of a human skull mounted in silver, like the old Bulgarian khans. Another indispensable article for the Tibetans is the spoon, invariably hanging from their girdles. These spoons are of metal and of extraordinarily original and curious design; they are of two sorts, one for men, the other for women. They are not very big, about five or six inches long; the lower part is used for sipping their broth or their tea, the upper for stirring their *satu*, roast barley meal, with tea or water.

More interesting than the wares in the bazaar are the human types one meets there. Here you may meet Tibetans from Lhassa, which is three months journey from here, Kashmiri, often dressed in a most picturesque and dandified fashion, Hindus from Peshawar, stalwart mountaineers from Baltistan, whose grey costume blends so closely with the rock that when they are resting by the roadside, tired of the heavy load, they can hardly be distinguished from the ground, clumsy Kashgar Sarts with their long *halats*, and others. The lingua franca here is our Central Asiatic Turki, and it is seldom that one finds anyone who can talk English. Tibetan is very difficult to learn to speak correctly. The modern tongue really comprises two distinct forms of speech necessary in daily intercourse, the everyday language used between equals, and the more formal speech, in which those of higher rank are addressed, as when servants are speaking to their masters. There is too, of course, classical Tibetan, which even many lamas do not understand. For this reason it is amusing to read some travellers' tales, who tell how they "studied Tibetan with the lamas" in Ladak, and read "ancient manuscripts in the monasteries," where they found remarkable stories about the visit of Jesus Christ

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to Tibet, where he is supposed to have spent several years in the capacity of a *chola* or student in a Tibetan monastery. Just such rubbish as this was written by a Russian traveller some thirty years ago, and has been dished up again by the Russian artist Roerich quite recently.

In the afternoon I entertained my Kashgar men, the *kerekeshi* of my caravan, who would soon be going home. A sheep was bought and roasted whole, unlimited tea with rolls, dried fruits, and so on. This was my thanksgiving for safe arrival from my laborious and dangerous journey. It was my *khudai*, as they call it in Turkestan, my sacrifice to Allah. Then the *caravanbash* and the *kerekeshi* thanked me and wished me a pleasant journey for the rest of the way into Kashmir. They were particularly grateful to me, because I "understood how to travel," and did not hurry them on the road, gave the men and animals enough rest, and did not bustle them. As a matter of fact too many travellers, accustomed to civilized countries, place their own comfort above everything, and hurry through to their destination as quickly as possible without any thought for the men or animals of their caravan. They jump on to their horses immediately after breakfast, forget that their servants want time to pack up their things, strike camp, and load the animals, and that it is the traveller's duty to be the last to leave the bivouac, and only when he has satisfied himself that nothing has been forgotten and left behind, that everything has been properly packed and loaded, and that the pack animals can keep up with the saddle-horses. It is arrant foolishness to make haste when the consequences may cost even the lives not only of beasts, but of the personnel of the caravan itself. They little know what fully deserved imprecations they bring down upon their heads.

In the yard of our bungalow there lived a little girl of about ten. Every evening I saw her in Sunday best, with a

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white basket of wire-grass on her back. She used to come into the yard wreathed in smiles, with her basket full of . . . horse dung! The collection of this valuable commodity in the streets is the duty of children, who use a special little shovel with a long handle. In Kashgar they are not so fussy . . . they pick it up with their hands and put it in a bag across their shoulder. One day, after a violent gale, when the streets were covered with fallen leaves, children came crowding out into the street to collect them; most of them were little girls, all dressed from head to foot in the orthodox costume; even tots of five or six years wore the turquoise cobra on their heads and carried a little toy basket on their backs.

Another very characteristic ornament of Tibetan women are bracelets made of conical shells. They are put on the wrists in childhood and remain there for the rest of their life, and when grown up the women could not take them off if they wanted to. These bracelets are the symbol of the subordination of women, and those who become Mahommedans replace them with silver bangles. The young girls are not bad looking, but they age rapidly and quickly become wrinkled and ugly; the skin darkens, and then they apply the bright yellow juice of some berry as cosmetic, with the double object of protecting them against sunburn and the evil eye.

But it must not be thought that the members of the fair sex in Ladak are subject to their husbands in the same way as the women of the Mahommedan countries of Asia. Quite the contrary, Ladak, or Little Tibet, is the only country in the world where polyandry still prevails and is officially recognized by the state and religion, a form of family relationship quite incomprehensible to Europeans, repellent to us and to their neighbours, Moslem and Hindu, alike. A Tibetan family, therefore, consists of several brothers

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A PLEASANT CAMPING GROUND

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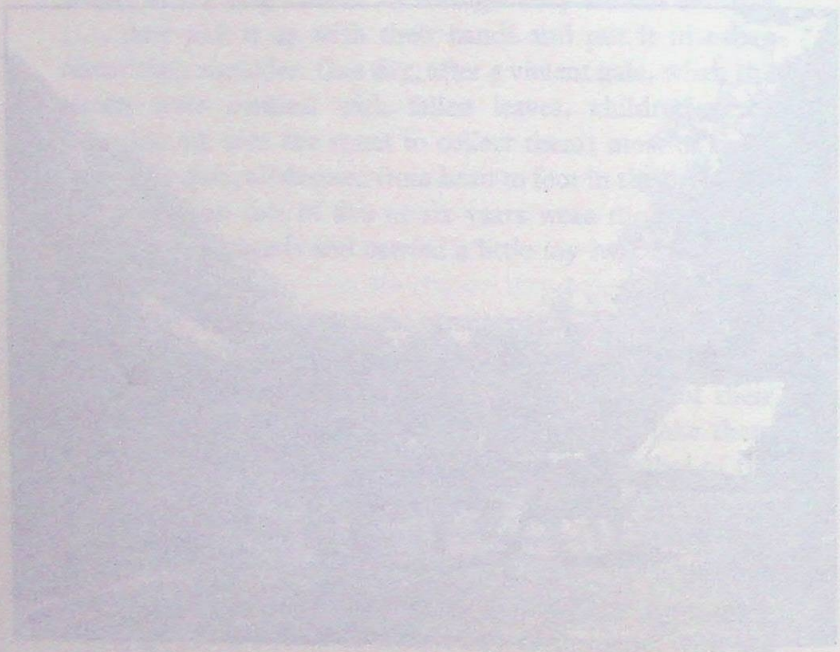

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who take one wife. Properly speaking, the eldest brother marries, passing on his rights after a week to the next brother, and so on. There may be as many as four or even five brothers thus sharing the affections of a single wife. But that is not all. The fair half of the family has the right of co-opting an outside party according to her choice. Such a person becomes a member of the family, is regarded as a brother, and shares with all the other brothers not only the affections of their common wife, but all their material possessions.

The daughters of rich and prominent Tibetans have the right of chosing their own husbands, and in that case too he becomes a member of his wife's family and participates in their possessions. Sometimes the girl's choice falls upon a fellow of no standing or position and then, as in the fairy stories, he becomes at once rich, prominent and the happy possessor of the beautiful damsel. But, as may happen in the story too, he may be struck by evil fortune. If he fail to please the young lady, or she be disappointed in her lover, at the end of a week he may be turned out of the house and fall back into his former condition. To soften the blow, the unfortunate ex-husband receives compensation, according to custom, in the form of a sheep. If he survive the week on probation, he becomes permanent husband, but the wife reserves the right of taking as many "brothers" for her first husband as she likes, *ad lib.*, in fact. It is not easy to account for the origin of so strange a form of marriage. In any case, it was not due to insufficiency of women, since a third of the male population and part of the female spend their days in the celibacy of monastic life. According to Julius Caesar, polyandry obtained in ancient Britain.

The religion of the Ladaki, Lamaism, is a sad instance of the perversion to which a pure and lofty creed may be subject, if unaccompanied by the spiritual development

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and education of the people. The pure moral teaching of Buddha has been converted into a blend of superstition, wild beliefs and contradictions. At the same time, we know that in the Middle Ages Buddhism was widely spread among the populations of the mountains of the north of India and exercised its softening influence on the customs of the people, so much so indeed that in many districts the death penalty was abolished and criminals guilty of serious offences were simply banished to wild and inaccessible districts in the mountains. The basis of the religious beliefs of the Lamaists is the idea of the necessity of expiation of sin in this life by means of prayer, in order to escape torture and sufferings in the next. The religious ideas and dances of the lamas, with their grotesque and horrible masks, tell the simple Tibetan eloquently of the kind of monsters he will have to face in the other world. The obvious, indeed the only, way to escape from these terrors is by the prayers of the lamas. Every Tibetan family, therefore, sends a son or a daughter into a monastery to pray for their sins, at the same time leaving to the wind and water the work of praying unceasingly to heaven by means of their flags and prayer-drums.

There are two main sects of lamas, the red and the yellow. The former are allowed to marry and engage in farming, but the latter do nothing but attend solely to their religious functions. Monks and nuns do not live in complete separation; on the contrary, the nuns perform various duties for the men's monasteries; they carry water for the monks, bake bread, prepare food for them, and so on.

Among the Ladaki there are also a good many Moslems and Hindus, so that here in Leh we do not see that uniform picturesqueness which is so distinctive in the Nubra Valley, which, thanks to its isolation, has retained its ancient traditional form of life in greater purity.

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At the same time, Leh is an extraordinarily original town. It owes much of its picturesque appearance to the massive stone castle, perched high above the town and the valley. It wants a steady head to climb up the narrow stair, which gives access to it, hewn in the living rock. In this castle there are a hundred rooms, like so many dark, gloomy, stone cases full of dust. Only one is complete and in use, for the hereditary ruler of Ladak to stop when he pays his annual visit on New Year's Day. He stays here one month and the rest of the time lives in a more pleasant spot on the left bank of the Indus. The old castle awakens thoughts of the remote and mysterious past, of the legends and origin of this strange people and land, lost in the mists of antiquity, for so long unknown to the civilized world of Europe.

A charming picture was the polo match arranged by the representative of the Maharajah of Kashmir. Formerly, they used to play polo in the main street of the town, in the avenue of poplars figured in all pictures of Leh, but now they play on a special ground laid out behind the town, between the walls of the old castle and a field of barley stubble. On the south of the Indus there towers an imposing crest, crowned with snowy peaks and glaciers; to the north rises the great crag crowned with the old castle, beyond which, higher still, stands a rocky mountain with a dark and gloomy monastery, converted out of a still more ancient castle. Now, during the match, I watched it illuminated by the rays of the sun setting behind the mountains. Tibetans, Moslems, and Hindus were all playing. The onlookers were crowded on the walls of the garden and everywhere where they could find standing room. There were turbans and fezes, the hats of lamas, and the caps of the Tibetans. A native band greeted the winners. Could one think of a more picturesque background for this ancient Asiatic game, which dates from the legendary days of the Emperor Afrasiab?

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The Maharajah's representative came to the polo match, attended by several servants, one of whom was leading a tame *kiang*, *Equus kiang*. This beast is easily tamed, but cannot be either ridden or harnessed. In appearance it looks rather like a light bay mule than either a horse or an ass. In the Kirghiz steppes of the Turgai and Akmolinsk provinces there still lives a closely allied species, the *djigitai*, *Equus hemionus*. I once had a tame one, caught when a foal by some Kirghiz, reared by a mare. It was an amusing pet, but as it grew older became bad tempered. These wild asses occur in Tibet in large herds of a hundred head or more. For eight days' journey on the road from Leh to Lhassa, on the open, barren plateau, there are plenty of kiangs and also wild yaks, but it is forbidden to hunt them. Wild yak afford first-rate sport, and has been well described by the famous Russian traveller N. M. Przewalski; it calls for the greatest endurance and boldness, and reminds one of the duel between a Spanish matador and an enraged bull. Ladak fully deserves its reputation for a first-rate sporting country.

The air of the Indus valley is pure and clear, and the rays of the sun are very hot, and burn the face and hands in spite of the altitude, but indoors, where the sun does not penetrate, the temperature remains very low. There may be a difference as great as seventy or eighty degrees Fahrenheit. At the same time the air is very dry, more so even than in the valleys of Kashgaria. Atmospheric precipitation is very low, hardly exceeding four or five inches in a year. The winter snows do not thaw, but simply dry up by evaporation, the consequence of which is that the snowline is very high, about 19,000 or 20,000 feet. There is very little water available for irrigation, so that the area available for crops is very small, and a great proportion of the surface of the country consists of barren mountains, rocks, and gravels.

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Leh . . . and Down the Indus

Although I was now in Indian territory geographically, ethnographically, and politically Nature here was still that of Central Asia, with the arid, stony mountains, tamarisks, poplars, willows, *Eleagnus* and junipers. The crests of the Himalayas to the south deprive Ladak of all the moisture from the monsoons, and the valley of the Indus in places recalls that of the Chu in Semirechie.

The first reference in literature to the mysterious mountain country is in the book of the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hien, in A.D. 400, who in his search for the "source of the Pure Faith" chose Ladak, so well sheltered by nature from the outside world.

But in spite of the protection afforded by nature, especially on the north, still Ladak has experienced once in her history invasion from that very side, from that terrible road over the Karakoram described by me. In the year 1531 Sultan Said Daulat Beg, Sultan of Kashgar, with an army of 14,000 men, invaded Ladak. Part of his army broke through into Kashmir, where it wintered. The following year the entire army advanced to the conquest of Eastern Tibet, but they perished almost to a man, unable to stand the hardships of the climate. It seems incredible that such a numerous force could make its way over that grim mountain desert of the Karakoram, and that Sultan Said organized his supplies.

I was three days in Leh before I had formed a new caravan of the small Tibetan ponies with their native drivers. On the fourth day at noon I said good-bye to my hospitable hostess of the Moravian Mission, and started once more upon the road. The city gates of Leh are absurdly small, more like the door of a big house. As we passed through our caravan stretched out in a long line and we set off along the flat, even country towards the Indus. This caravan was very different in appearance from my last, for the pack-ponies were hardly bigger than asses, and my

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saddle-horse seemed a giant among them. All the drivers were Bhoti, in grey, with their odd caps and great rings in their ears and bracelets on their wrists as they marched along; on the backs of some there hung a little pot in a net, on others an object resembling an iron quivir. This was not a weapon, but an apparatus for making tea. The water is boiled with soda in the pot, and tea put in and then poured across into the cylinder, where a pinch of salt is added, some toasted barley meal and butter, and then it is all stirred and mixed well with a special wooden spoon. The result is thick, like chocolate, not at all bad to drink, and very nutritious. This method of preparing tea-broth is widely spread throughout Mongolia and in Siberia beyond Lake Baikal, among the Buriats and also the Russians, only soda is not used there. Soda is necessary in Tibet, where water boils at a much lower temperature above 10,000 feet. For this reason, and also because of changes in the sense of taste, tea made in Tibet in the Chinese way is no longer nice, while tea made in the local manner is the staple food of the Bhoti.

Very surprising to me was the silence at the stopping-places. There were no cries, nor noise, and even the big dogs did not bark. One could walk past and never know that there was a big caravan bivouacking close by. This was a great contrast to my party when we left Kök Yar, when the cries of the *kerekeshi* were added to the neighing of the horses, the angry snorting of the camels and the desperate braying of the donkeys. On the road from Leh to Srinagar the only pack-animals used are horses and yaks. Camels would be very useful here, but the delicate one-humped camel of the plains would never face the severe cold of Ladak, and our two-humped, so-called Bactrian camel, splendidly fitted for the cold and dry winters of the steppes, could never cross the glaciers and moraines. He is a handsome beast in his winter coat, the thick, fluffy hair covering his entire body

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like a great blanket, with a great hairy fringe hanging down under his throat to protect his long gullet from the cold when he sleeps with his neck stretched out on the ground; his legs are well covered with hair too, looking like baggy breeches or plus-fours, and his head is a mass of curly hair like a wig. Thanks to this protection, our camel laughs at the severest frosts of the Turgai steppes, when the temperature falls below the freezing-point of mercury. All he asks, for his sleeping place for the night, is for the snow to be cleared away, as otherwise it would thaw under the warmth of his body and then freeze on to his belly in a sheet of ice. It is to avoid this that the yak is provided with such a dense great hairy mattress completely covering his belly.

It is interesting that in Ladak almost all animals in winter grow an undercoat of very fine down, known, oddly enough, by the name *pushmin*, obviously a corruption of our Russian word *pushnina*. This soft down of the Ladak goats used to provide the material for the famous shawls of Kashmir. The goats of Kashmir itself do not grow such down on account of the mild and moist winter, so the material for the shawls is imported not only from Ladak, but even from Kashgar. The goats of the southern Urals and of the Pri-Ural steppe grow just such a down, and this gave rise to a similar domestic industry among the Cossacks of the Orenburg country, who used to make just the same kind of shawl. These Orenburg *platki*, or kerchiefs were like the very finest old lace in white or grey. A down kerchief of this sort, fifteen to sixteen square yards in size, could be pulled through a wedding ring, so soft were they. But these Orenburg kerchiefs have disappeared, just as the Kashmir shawls of old.

On our first day we went only as far as the village of Spituk, situated on the bank of the Indus. The peaks on the right side of the river were covered with fine, greyish sand, looking just like snow. The sand lying on the flanks of the

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hills and in these valleys creeps just like glaciers down the ravines, and form "sandfalls," regular cascades of sand. The reason is that on this side of the river the mountains consist of granite and other crystalline rocks, which disintegrate here under the influence of frost and the sun, just as in arid desert regions, so that sand is formed instead of the boulders, gravel, and shingle characteristic of countries with abundant atmospheric precipitation. The mountains on the left bank consist of sandstones and shales, so the river flows along the boundary line between these two formations.

Where the road approaches the river there rises a lofty hill, standing alone, crowned with an ancient fortress. This picturesque view reminded me of the banks of the Rhine with its ancient castles. Turning to the right we skirt the remains of an ancient river terrace of lacustrine deposits. What a beautiful lake it must have been! Then we rode past big *chortens* and came to a bungalow standing alone in the middle of an extensive garden, just like an old, deserted homestead. The garden consisted of tall poplars and willows, with many dwarfed *Eleagnus* and big irises, *Iris kumaonensis*, Wall, which is used here as winter feed for cattle; the ground was thickly covered with fallen leaves of various colours and cut with a network of canals with clear, transparent water and fresh green grass along their banks. I expected at any moment to flush a woodcock from the shrubs, or to see a cock pheasant rise noisily, but this was only a superficial and chance resemblance to the distant north. In the garden there were only a few redstarts fluttering about and some chattering magpies. For long I strolled about the neighbourhood, making the acquaintance of nature in these upper reaches of the great river of Hindustan and, to tell the truth, I really felt that I was back in Semirechie, in some mountain valley of the Tian Shan.

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Leh . . . and Down the Indus

The road from Srinagar to Leh has been described by many a traveller and tourist. It has been splendidly laid out, but, of course, only for saddle-horses, and is well kept up. There are comfortable bungalows at the stopping-places, where for a fixed sum provisions may be had and forage for the horses. This is looked after by an officer called the British Joint Commissioner in Ladak. Of course the impression conveyed by this road depends entirely upon the direction from which the traveller arrives. After the luxurious bungalows of Kashmir and driving in a comfortable car along the splendid motor road through the subtropical nature of the southern crests of the Himalayas and the splendid and impressive landscapes, the traveller coming from Srinagar will see only monotony and poverty in the bridle road through the arid mountains, gloomy defiles and narrow tracks at the edge of precipices. But to him who has been fated to make his way to the luxuriant dales of Kashmir over the heights of the Roof of the World, to suffer the privations and dangers of the road and the miseries of mountain-sickness the journey from Leh to Srinagar produces a totally different impression, of growing interest, pleasure and relief.

To me personally, who had ridden here all the way from the southern Urals, over the Kirghiz steppes, through Turkestan, Semirechie, and Kashgaria, this road offered the highest interest. Before my eyes I saw unrolled the immense panorama, as I recalled and saw it in all its details, and observed the changing face of the localities, vegetation, nature, and mankind across half Asia. In spite of all the privations and dangers to which I had been exposed, I would not for one moment exchange this great ride of mine for all the modern "expeditions" by aeroplane in the world.

Our next stop was at Nimu, fifteen miles from Spituk. This is a large scattered village, or rather, oasis in the

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mountains. The road follows the spurs of the mountains and in dropping down to the village meets the Indus where it issues from the gloomy rocky gorge. Riding round a bluff of green and dark red porphyrites, with a mass of *chortens* at its foot, the road winds between stone walls and terraced fields. Little irrigation canals run on every side with crystal-clear water. The little houses, in characteristic Tibetan style, with their decorated balconies, stand out among the apricot-trees, now covered with yellow and purple foliage, while huge junipers stands like cypresses. We rode into an extensive garden through a highly original road cut beneath a huge *chorten*, where some diminutive black sheep were grazing in the juicy meadow grass. In the middle was a small but very comfortable bungalow. It is much warmer down here than in Leh, and apple-trees grow here, which do not up there. The whole day was bright and sunny. Beyond Nimu the road to Saspul passes through a whole mass of *chortens* and *mané* walls, many of them hundreds of feet long, 5 to 7 feet high and 10 to 12 in thickness. Their entire surface was thickly covered with slabs of various rocks with Tibetan prayers engraved upon them. The ends of the *mané* are marked by *chortens*.

Farther on the Indus makes a sharp turn to the left into a narrow rocky defile and disappears from view, while the road drops into a lateral valley running among highly eroded crags of steeply dipping sandstone, passing in places into grey and dark red. Among these strikingly coloured rocks there is a small village with a long, narrow street, with tall poplars and variegated apricot-trees. All the colours are very bright and gay, and the whole picture simply begs to be put on canvas. The village is bounded by a whole city of *chortens*, great and small, of all sorts and designs. On the right are high rocks and defiles of a sandstone standing vertically, weathered out into the most capricious and fantastic forms. Here among

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the rocks and cliffs there stand the little Tibetan houses, one of them with three stories, one above the other.

It is incomprehensible why the Tibetans feel constrained to strive high and ever higher, giving themselves the work of climbing up the rocks and all the inconveniences of daily life, hauling water and firewood up the steep, rocky paths. Of course, life among mountains, cliffs, and rocks has impressed this passion for climbing on their whole nature, just as with climbing birds and mammals, and inheritance through thousands of years has made it second nature to them. The highest cliffs and the peaks are crowned with the ruins of ancient towers and old fortresses.

After this strange village which seems to have been cut directly out of the antiquity, the road leaves the valley abruptly by zigzags among old boulders and glacial deposits, rising to a lofty, desert plateau. Here I overtook the small caravan of a Hindu trader with goods bound for Skardu, the capital of Baltistan. He had a tent, folding furniture, and other articles of comfort. He greeted me very civilly, and gladly gave me information about this country, which he evidently knew very well. When I dismounted and led my horse, he did the same, following me on the road. The ground was absolutely bare, with only an occasional bright spot here and there, where sprawled a caper plant, *Capparis spinosa*. But in the dells and between the hills there was a little grass. The Hindu told me that a lot of ibex come down here in winter-time, but they are rigidly protected and the natives forbidden to shoot them.

From the plateau the road gradually drops to the Indus again, whose valley here is considerably widened and every convenient spot taken up by fields, gardens, and farms. As in most of the places, almost everywhere in this country, the soil is formed artificially by the patient toil of the population; it is cleared of stones, built into horizontal terraces

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along the flanks of the hills, banked up with massive stone walls, irrigation canals constructed, to bring water from the ravines, sometimes by the steepest cliffs among the crags and through tunnels driven through thick bluffs.

The Indus flows here in a narrow gorge between vertical cliffs. The mountains on the south side stand like a gigantic wall, and glaciers creep down from their snowy peaks, with their snouts, of course, ending high above the valley. The hills immediately beyond the river consist of shales standing vertically, banded with grey and dark cherry-red, the tops jagged, bare and lifeless.

After Saspul we crossed by a bridge a mountain torrent falling into the Indus. Above the bridge, on a lofty mountain stands an ancient castle, now half ruined. These ancient ruins, castles, huge buildings of stone, lamaseries and houses, sharply distinguish Ladak from Turkestan, where all buildings, both ancient and modern, are made of clay or unburnt brick, which quickly crumbles, so that all that is left of ancient structures is a heap of earth. The only stone buildings which I saw there are near the Chinese frontier, in the gorge of Tash Ravat, to the north of Chatyr Köl, the well-preserved but very ancient remains of an old Buddhist monastery, situated in an isolated and barren valley, a very characteristic locality like those of Ladak.

Then we dropped down to the Indus and into its gorge through a gate built beneath a huge *chorten*, just like the watch-tower of some mediaeval European city. Here the stream is constricted between two lofty cliffs, through which at a great height above the raging torrent is stretched a long and narrow bridge of native construction, of course without parapet. It calls for the very greatest confidence in one's horse to ride over such a bridge, and even walking over it when it is swaying over the boiling stream far below requires good strong nerves.

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Fortunately our road did not cross the river, so the pleasure of imitating Blondin at Niagara was not necessary. All the way to Nurla (Snurla) we rode along the gorge near the water itself, then climbed high up the cliffs along ledges. In places the ravine widened, and along the brooks running down from the mountains were fields, gardens, houses and trees, and then again the gloomy cliff surrounded us. At one place we rode at the root of a lofty mountain, the steep side of which, covered with screes, was banded from top to bottom with grey-green, dark green, dark brown, and dark red, which was most effective, looking just as though put on with a gigantic paintbrush. The mountain consists of beds of sandstone of various colours standing vertically; these weather out into this striking coloration, which is possible only in arid districts where the flanks of the mountains are not protected by any carpet of vegetation.

The bungalow at Nurla stands over the cliff of a deep cleft, in which the greenish-blue waters of the Indus boil and rage. All around are masses of great and small boulders and shingle. In the little orchards of the village are numerous apricot and big walnut-trees, and they brought me small but delicious apples. Stretching myself out in an armchair on the verandah of the bungalow, how I enjoyed resting there, thinking how nice it would be to ride out onto an open plain, upon the broad green steppe, to have a good gallop, to stretch oneself on the flat, to have space and room to move in, to let one's horse go. How different the scene I contemplated! Mountains on every side, rocks, glaciers, gloomy defiles, ledges, abysses, cliffs, precipices, riding possible only at a slow walk, picking one's way between the stones and rocks, among crags, the attention constantly alert, on such break-neck paths, it was all so overwhelming, so fatiguing, so wearying and boring; it all acted on my nerves and seemed to cramp and depress me. One craved for space and freedom.

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But there was far to go yet, and there were nothing but mountains still before me, and God knows what unpleasant surprises the road yet held in store for me.

The difference between the charming valley of the Nubra and the sterile, harsh valley of the Indus is immense. There, the level floor of the valley, with the stream flowing quietly through, everything fenced off from the outside world by the vertical walls of the most lofty mountains, crowned with snow and ice. Here, ravines, flanks of mountains, hills, steep slopes; the peaks hidden by the hills. The river at one minute entering a narrow defile, the next flowing in a deep cleft, roaring, tumbling, tearing, boiling. There, everything quaint, picturesque, coloured, as though built in some unknown, remote past, original and poor, but pleasing; on the faces of the inhabitants happiness and contentment. Here everything is grey, depressing, as though some outside influence had invaded and spoilt the original aspect and life of the country.

"You must look after the horses well at night, or lock them up in the yard," the guard of the bungalow warned me; "there are horse-thieves here who would steal them and make away with them to Baltistan."

"Then why don't you keep watch-dogs?" I asked him, remembering what powerful and handsome dogs I had seen in the Nubra.

"We have nothing to feed them on here, and in the winter the wolves come down the mountains and kill them."

But the character of the Tibetans is the same down here. They are good-natured, honourable, and industrious. The best witness of the latter feature are the little piles of grass on the cliffs on the far side of the river. This is collected with the greatest labour and risk to life among the crevices of the cliffs in small quantities, collected into bundles and now awaits the winter's frosts, when they can take them across

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the river into the village. Only here I did not hear the melodious little songs of the Nubra, nor did I see the Bhoti dance.

Our next halt was in the little village of Kalatse, situated on a steep slope, covered with old trees and pleasant-looking houses. Here there is a post office and telegraph station. The pretty little bungalow is high up on the mountain flank, with the fields and houses of the Tibetans below. Under huge shady walnut-trees are piled bales of merchandise, and a caravan has outspanned, with yaks and horses. On the other side of the Indus a mountain range rears itself like a massive wall. On the right of the post office the mission villa stood out prettily, in the Tibetan style. The Rev. Burroughs and his wife very kindly invited me to dine with them, and I spent three very pleasant hours in their charming company. They have lived here so long and know the country, Baltistan, so well that I was most interested in the conversation. Mr. Burroughs not only cures the souls of the natives, enlightening them with Christian teaching, but also cures their bodies, restoring sight to the blind by the skilful treatment of cataract.

The Tibetans are much more humane than the folk of Kashgar, and treat their sick far better. Many a hadji dies by the wayside, chiefly from dysentery, and their comrades simply leave them on the road. Not long before my arrival a Hindu picked up a Moslem woman abandoned by the roadside, and brought her into Leh.

The hospitable missionaries gave me an abundant supply of fresh vegetables out of their garden and also copies of the Indian newspaper, *The Pioneer*, which I had been accustomed to read and appreciate in far Kashgar.

The village of Kalatse, in spite of its post and telegraph, is an isolated hole, and I felt a feeling of intense respect for those devoted workers who, for the sake of their Christian

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duty, gave up their lives for humanity in such wild and desolate corners of the earth, so utterly far from the world they belonged to.

The weather was still splendid, the sky cloudless, and it was a pleasure to breathe the fresh morning air when we rode out of the village. We passed a group of *chortens* and dropped down the valley to the Indus, where the road divided, the right fork leading to Skardu on the right bank, the other crossing the Indus by a bridge and going on to Kashmir.

It is a beautiful and interesting bridge. The river at this point is narrowed up between vertical cliffs, but still is decidedly broad. Approach to the river on this side is protected by a castle exactly like a real mediaeval European *tête de pont* with towers, turrets, battlemented walls, and immense gates. Riding in, the traveller passes through the narrow and twisting courtyard of the fortress and straight out on to the bridge, which is long and slightly arched in the middle and sways like a cradle. On the far bank it abuts directly against the cliff, and the roads turn sharply to the right and rises up a terrace. At close quarters, however, the castle turns out to be of very light and flimsy construction; it is smeared over with clay and has a more decorative than defensive character. But the view over the river, the bridge, the rocks, and the castle is very fine, well worthy of the name of this great river.

Then the trail rises and turns again sharply to the left into a very narrow, deep, and dismal defile, and follows the river by narrow ledges above the torrent, dashing and roaring between immense masses of conglomerate below.

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CHAPTER XII

LAMAYURU TO DRAS

HERE we leave the valley of the Indus and head due south up a narrow ravine, which in places is no more than a crevice between two cliffs cut by the stream Yonu, which crashes down into the Indus from the pass of Fotu-la at 14,000 feet, past the well-known monastery of Lamayuru. In some places the narrow ledge which forms the trail rise to a great height above the stream, clinging to the cliffs, the edges trodden down in places, showing distinctly that some poor wretch of a horse has gone over, and in other places broken down, so that the ledge is narrower than ever. I had to dismount several times and lead my horse. This stretch of the road, the rise from the valley of the Indus to the heights of Lamayuru, is one of the worst pieces of the whole road, although not without a certain beauty.

At the point where the road crosses the stream, which dashes through a deep gorge far below, there is a bridge with a parapet. The sight of such a strange phenomenon as a parapet was too much for my horse and he refused to go on it until I dismounted and showed him the way. Here, strangely enough, was a small stone hut with a scrap of a garden, all alone in this sterile mountain crevice, for it was nothing more, with only bare rocks around. Then there are no more of those ledges; the road runs on artificial supports of stone, which are difficult and decidedly dangerous when half-covered by fallen rock from above. The sombre cliffs of this defile consists of conglomerates, granite, syenite, gneiss and schists, very solid, dark green and red in colour, passing into jasper.

Suddenly the defile narrowed up still more, until it was

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a mere fissure between the great cliffs; we could not see ahead and the air was filled with the roar of an unseen waterfall. Then it abruptly turns to the right, zigzagging up the walls of the ravine. It was difficult to mount, for fear the horse would overbalance, and tiring to climb up that great height on foot. The zigzags were short and steep, and the caravan below me looked just as though coming upstairs. If a horse went over the edge, nothing could save those beneath and all would go crashing down together. The poor brutes were panting from the steepness of the rise, and we had to stop every few minutes to let them get their wind. When on top, we had to ride by narrow, winding ledges, sometimes uphill, sometimes down, over giddy precipices. Then we dropped somewhat down to the stream again and for a time rode along its valley; here it flows with a peaceful murmur among the stones.

Then once more a great drop, and once again a rise by zigzags high above the steep bank, this time on the left side of the gorge, and once again the path is narrow and dangerous along the edge of the abyss, from which the roar of a cascade reaches our ears. At this point an isolated conglomerate pillar stands vertically, like an index finger. By these two great steps upwards we reached an extensive, undulating plateau surrounded by mountains. These hills are heavily eroded lacustrine deposits. Perched on the right, high up at the edges of cliffs and on the eroded columns of loess there stand a cluster of monastery buildings, old and new. The thickness of the loess cliffs is riddled with caves, the cells of hermits. This is the famous monastery of Lamayuru. A bungalow stands on a small elevation, the verandah facing the south, towards a steep rocky mountain, at the foot of which flows the stream, bordered with rows of willows. It was only eleven miles from Kalatse, but it took me four hours to ride it, so steep and tiring was the rise

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from the Indus to the plateau of Lamayuru. The caravan arrived an hour after me.

The trumpet-call to prayer resounded through the air from the lamasery above, mingling with the melodious note of the choughs on the rocky slopes. After lunch I went to have a look at the monastery. Among the masses of buildings perched on the tops of the columns of the cliffs, one in particular stands out, a new one, white, with balconies and overhanging the precipice, dominating the others. At the foot of the mountain is a quantity of *chortens* and a spring of splendid crystal-clear water comes gushing down the hill. At the moment I was there women were flocking round it to collect water, among them a few nuns, with big, heavy iron cylinders on their backs in which to carry water for the monks up the steep face of the cliff. It would be far more convenient, simple, and practical, as well as humane, to employ donkeys for this work, as they do in Kashgar, but evidently the duty of water-supply for the monks is a means of acquiring merit for the fair sex, while the stronger one devotes its energies to the recital of prayers and fulfilment of the ritual, who do not, however, bother their heads much about the reading of the sacred books, and like to delegate the duty of prayer to the more convenient and efficient water-wheels.

I climbed higher and saw that the entire hill is taken up with a labyrinth of buildings, stone enclosures for the cattle, yards, crooked little lanes, and then entered a dark, long covered-in corridor, leading up like a stairway, with stairs cut in the rock itself. It was a strange sensation, almost painful in this dim, mysterious passage, in an atmosphere of great antiquity, as though I were climbing up inside a mountain, where was preserved the life of past millennia. On the way I overtook a young nun bent under the weight of an iron cylinder full of water; the poor thing was climbing

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slowly, panting under her burden. Yes, it is a hard life, acquiring merit in the service of monks and lamas.

The corridor leads out on to an open space commanding a wonderful panorama. Far below the river was visible, and it sounded strange to hear the mournful cry of the peewit rising up from its banks. Above I heard the prayer music of the lamas. The steep tunnel-corridor, cut in the living schists, rose steeply, with little windows cut through the outside wall of the cliff giving a fitful and dim illumination to the uneven, slippery steps. Everything was rough, simple, but, as it were, full of mysterious import. Coming in from the brilliant sunshine, from the life below, from under the deep blue sky, a simple man cannot but be impressed in the dismal bowels of the lofty, massive cliff.

I stood a moment in indecision. A figure appeared out of the darkness, of a lama with a good-natured face and reddish hair. With a polite gesture, he invited me to follow him upwards. The tunnel bends sharply, and we came out above the cliff into the three-storied monastery building. Leading off is a high wall, which must exist for purely decorative purposes only, for there is nothing behind it and the blue sky shows through the open windows. In the main building there are the monks' rooms, the library, offices, and so on. In a large hall there stand great images, and on a table in front with censers, candles and all the paraphernalia of their ritual, among which are phalli made of dough. The images are in the Indian style. There are frescoes of saints with aureoles on their heads, just as in our Christian pictures and icons, and there are strange figures like winged lions.

The spirit of the place grips you. An enchanting, inspiring panorama holds you enthralled as you gaze out from the balcony, which seems to be floating in the air. Around . . . nothing, only the blue sky . . . all the world lies far beneath, hidden away below. It is a strange sensation, to see blue

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space around and nothing more, yet to stand upon firm ground, as though face to face with heaven. Now you begin to see a glimmer, to understand something of this perpetual striving of the lamas for height, and their call to prayer in this airy space high above the earth and its sinful world. This feeling of religious exhaltation must be specially strong in the early morning before sunrise, when all beneath is still slumbering in the deep shadow of the mountains, and only on high is there the light of the sun that is not yet come into view from beyond the peaks.

No one who has seen the liturgy of the lamas, their vestments, their statues, their censers, candles, and so on, can fail to be astonished at the external resemblance of their ritual to that of the Roman Catholics. Of course, there is no question of imitation or borrowing. The first missionaries who reached the Orient and saw the Buddhist ritual were astounded at the resemblance, and explained it as the work of the devil, who, in his constant struggle to do evil to mankind, made haste to reach the peoples of the East first and teach them a false religion and perverted ritual. The Jesuit priest, Ippolito Desideri,* who was in Tibet in the beginning of the eighteenth century, came to the positive conclusion that all the incongruities of the Lamaism were due to nothing else than the wiles of Satan.

As I was going over the monastery, in one room I saw some nuns preparing dinner for the brethren of the monastery. Evidently the rule of the monastery here is not too strict, and does not insist upon the rigorous separation of the sexes. Perhaps eremites who live alone on the peaks or in caverns are completely ascetic.

Down by the spring, children offered clusters of the red berries of the wild rose instead of bouquets. The Tibetans

* *Ippolito Desideri: An Account of Tibet, 1712–1727*, edited by Filippo de Filippi (Routledge).

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are very fond of flowers, and when there are none they adorn their heads with the fruit of *Physalis*, wild rose or oleaster. Their favourite flowers are the marigold, *Calendula*. Crows, *Corvus tibetanus*, boldly strut about among the monastery buildings; they are very numerous here. On the bank of the stream there is a series of water-mills, run by a kind of primitive turbine. They are very low, and there is only room inside to sit down; they are closed in all round and the only ingress is by a round opening kept carefully shut with a big stone.

Lamayuru stands at 11,200 feet above the sea, that is, at the same altitude as Leh, but vegetation is even poorer, the surrounding mountains completely bare and sterile, with only little scanty tufts of grass here and there in the nooks to afford nibbling for the few goats of the inhabitants.

It was a wonderful, bright, clear morning the next day when we left Lamayuru, passed the long row of *chortens* and fields, and began our way up stream. The sides of the valley are of conglomerate, eroded by water action into cones and columns, a form of weathering very common in dry regions. The ground is scattered with pieces of shale and vein quartz, which is suggestive of gold. This stream is auriferous in its lower reaches, and in winter the natives wash it for the precious metal.

We made our way by a lateral arm of the stream to the pass of Fotu-la, at 14,300 feet. The rise was neither steep nor stony. At the foot of the pass, on the left of the road, a quartz vein is exposed, again suggestive of gold. The nearer the pass, the more vegetation is visible at the springs, green patches of turf, some low creeping shrubs and bushes of wild lavender, *Perovskia*, while here and there the slopes are dotted with little patches of grass. This is pleasant to look upon, and one rides out on to the pass as though on some

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ordinary mountain, but the view of the unending chain of sterile, rocky, jagged peaks show that we have passed one more watershed.

Above the pass on the right there is a huge mass of shales standing vertically, shewing an outline like a great pile of countless planks.

The descent from the pass is even easier than the rise, down slopes and inclines and hollows, until after a few miles we came to a *mané* wall and *chortens* and some stone huts, near which a quartz vein was cropping out, and then we came out into a transverse valley. On the left there opened the mouth of a picturesque ravine between cliffs with snow-clad peaks beyond, while on the right, round a bend in the track, where you expect a steep precipice, there is a pleasant surprise. The valley broadens, to form an extensive amphitheatre, cut by a river, with huts, fields, rows of *chortens*, and a handsome wooden bridge over the river. A mile or two farther, and you come to a little bungalow situated at the mouth of a lateral ravine, out of which runs a canal to irrigate the fields of the village of Karbu. On the west of the bungalow a great limestone cliff rises like an immense wall and cuts off the sun as early as three in the afternoon. A row of willows grows along the banks of the canal, while at the foot of the hill is the inevitable witness of Tibetan devotion, a cluster of *chortens* and *mané*. All around . . . lofty mountains, some capped with snow. Long before evening it turned cold, although there was no wind; perhaps some layer of cold air, unnoticed in the gorge, creeps down from some hidden glacier.

Opposite the bungalow there is a mosque. In this district there are plenty of Moslems among the Tibetans; they live peacefully side by side with the Lamaists. This was the first mosque I had seen since Ak Madjid, or, rather, since Kök Yar. The farther we moved away from Leh the more the general

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appearance of the houses, buildings, inhabitants, and their clothing departs from the purely Tibetan type, which can be seen in its purest and least spoilt form in the charming valley of the Nubra. Round Karbu earthquakes are not uncommon, nor, as a matter of fact, are they rare in Ladak. On the night of my arrival at Leh there was a noticeable shock. Living in Turkestan, one becomes accustomed to this phenomenon, which is rare in other countries, and ceases to take notice of it.

On the morning when we left Karbu the water in the canal was frozen. We passed the ruins of a village referred to by Bellew, who took part in the Forsyth Expedition, by broad alluvial terraces covered by fields and hamlets. The farther we went, the greater the amount of land available for cultivation and irrigation, the more verdure on the hills, the wider the valleys, the thicker the population and more prosperous.

On the right of the stream there is a huge solitary rock, with the picturesque ruins of an imposing old castle on top, and a small village nestling at its foot.

We leave the river valley on the right and begin to rise to a pass like the one passed the previous day, but even easier, greener, and more covered with grass, now of course withered. On the way we met two missionaries, husband and wife, and then, almost at the top of the pass, we met a girl with golden hair, alone, on foot, with a stick in her hand. We stopped.

"Are you a Swede?" she asked me.

"No," I replied, "I am a Russian refugee, on my way from Western China into India and then to Europe."

We chatted for a few minutes.

Miss K. was bound for Leh to work in the Moravian Mission, to devote herself to the education of the natives, the care of their sick, and to work for the spread of Christianity.

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She warmly pressed my hand when we parted, and she said:

"God bless you!"

This strange and momentary meeting and this sincere, spontaneous blessing made a profound impression upon me. This girl, young and handsome, had abandoned her home, her family, her friends, the world of culture and civilization, pleasure, amusement, entertainment, civilized life in fact, and left for a strange, far, inhospitable, cold country, where a man cannot even breathe without difficulty, "on the frontier of life," to lead there a lonely, laborious life of Christian endeavour.

From the bottom of my heart I wish her every happiness and good fortune in her work.

To-day's pass was extraordinarily like the one of the previous day. There were the same shales exposed on the left of the road, with jagged outline like a cock's comb. The descent, down a grassy slope, brought us to a big valley of the Vahat Daryá, or Wakkha. On the far side there rose a range of rocky crests one behind the other, up to an immense height. On the left of our road, where the stream joins the river, there is a huge rock with a likeness to the outline of a human head, with a cluster of Tibetan houses at its foot. All round, even high up the flanks of the mountains, is a network of irrigation canals, terrace fields, and rows of willows. Farther down the valley is the village of Mulbek. We rode past and came out at the end of the valley where it is pinched in by cliffs. The trail, going along the flanks of the valley on the northern side, approaches an isolated rock, part of which forms the road, cut and levelled, with prayer-flags fluttering on top and at its foot a bunch of Tibetan houses, among them a handsome building with large windows, closed door, and a little garden. On riding close up, I saw a sculptured statue of Buddha, half concealed by the house. Farther on

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the road approaches another great rock with the ruins of a castle on top and a tall, white lamasery. It is incomprehensible how the people who live there find their way up the face of that cliff.

At the foot of it there is a caravanserai, with a modern mosque, as at Karbu. The trail goes here on ledges and buttresses high above the bottom of the valley, and then drops to a little bungalow standing in the shade of willows. The river flows beneath, and stone walls are visible beyond, and the terraces of fields; farther beyond still the sheer walls of a conglomerate, forming tiers, alternating with screes, and high above them great limestone heights weathered into capricious outlines, with towers, columns, ruins, and battlements. Behind are the bungalow, the caravanserai, mosque, and a huge *chorten*.

The Tibetans do not walk their horses about after a day's journey, as our people do in Turkestan, and so the fellow to whom I handed my reins to walk the horse round simply sat on a wall, held the reins in his hand, and kicked his heels. As nobody down here understood our Central Asian lingua franca, Turki, I could not explain to him what I wanted.

After lunch I went to have a look at the statue of Buddha. The house covers it to the girdle. At the time of the invasion of Ladak by the Kashgarians under Sultan Said Daulat Beg, the Tibetans covered up the whole statue, which is carved in the rock itself, concealing it with buildings, for fear the fanatical Mahommedan commander would destroy the "Butt," to him an idol, or some Mahommedan soldier would disfigure the holy one, as the revolutionary French general did with the Sphinx when he shot away its nose.

The entire Buddha is exposed. He has four arms, two of which are holding a serpent, and a necklace round his neck. The house has been whitewashed, the cornices and windows painted red. In one corner of the roof, which is flat, as they

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all are here, there is a large white vase of rough workmanship with a "dry" bouquet. On the top of the rock itself stood a pair of tall figures on which were waving two white silk skirts with pale blue edging, the contribution to the statue of some notability.

From this point the whole of the valley is visible, a fine view of the village and the rock like a head which I noticed on the road. The sky was clear and cloudless, dark blue. Against it an inaccessible cliff stood out picturesquely with a lamasery at the edge, while above that, soared a lammergeier. Probably the inmates of so inaccessible a retreat do not live in such intimate contact with the world and the nuns as do those of Lamayuru.

Our caravan arrived late and settled down in the caravanserai. The Tibetan horses, in spite of their small size, carry their loads well, although they have heavy climbs every day. The Tibetans treat them very well, not beating them nor yelling, nor cursing at them, and perhaps it is this good treatment has its reward in the good temper and manners of the animals, just as the Arab, who treats his horse as a member of the family, has produced a quiet, steady, and friendly creature. The impatient, quick-tempered Sart of Turkestan is undoubtedly reflected in the character of his Karabair, *argamak*. These horses go on working to a great age. In the caravan of the missionary whom we met on the road there was a mare thirty-two years old, and she was carrying a full weight; she looked well and fit; her legs were sound, but her teeth were worn out, and barley was roasted specially for her every day.

The next day we had a stage of twenty-four miles, nothing extraordinary for a good saddle-horse on the plains, but for a Tibetan pack-pony in mountain paths a very substantial distance. It was October 24th, just two months since I

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had left Kashgar, and now I was not far from the goal of my long ride, Srinagar, on the threshold of European civilization. That day we had to camp at Kargil, a big village, centre of an administrative district, where we should quit the area of Buddhist faith and culture and enter that of Islam. Good-bye to the *chortens*, the *mané*, the great lama-series, the high Tibetan houses, the peculiar costumes. But the facial and physical type of the inhabitants was unchanged, we still met the same honest and good-natured folk.

"Over there, beyond the pass of Zoji-la, you must take care and keep your eye on your things; they are terrible thieves over there, very different from the simple-minded, honest folk here," I was warned.

That day we had to ride on some lofty cornices, where the trail was narrow although the rocks were soft; it crumbled, and in places was broken away; then a ravine formed by cliffs of dark serpentine, by a picturesque waterfall came down in a series of dancing cascades . . . and more rocky cornices and narrow artificial buttresses, through some villages and then once more on a dangerous, narrow cornice, over a sheer abyss high above the river. This was interrupted by great cracks crossed by little bridges where I rode over with my heart in my mouth. We went through the village of Darget and then to a gorge between two cliffs, one of shales, the other of conglomerate. To ride round this gorge we had to climb by zigzags up a steep rise to a very considerable height and then down again to the river. It was nice riding a while along the flat among the tamarisk thickets, and restful after the strain of riding over the narrow cornices and giddy precipices. And after so long among naked rocks, too, it was a relief to see some vegetation again, poor as it was. We stopped to lunch at the village of Paskum or Pashkyum. Farther on where the valley widens it is broken up into

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fields, orchards, and villages, a picture of verdure in startling contrast with the grey sterile mountain masses surrounding it. This fertile valley ends in an impassable gorge of conglomerate cliffs and rocks, a regular gloomy labyrinth of clefts and crevices, to avoid which the road begins to rise higher and higher up the steep slope of the mountain bounding the village on the south.

When you reach the top, you naturally expect to find a corresponding drop, and I was surprised to come upon an extensive grassy plain. I was still more surprised to see an irrigation canal cutting across the road into an artificial tunnel driven through the conglomerates. Whence could this canal draw its water, as the plain is at a higher altitude than the streams and rivers, which we left far below? We rode a full hour over this plateau and I really felt as though I were riding over my beloved steppe again, and for the first time on all this long wearisome journey I indulged in the luxury of a trot. My horse was as pleased as I was.

There was a view of the deep and narrow valley of the Suru, with the town of Kargil. The road leads into a basin, dropping steeply to the river, which it follows by an artificial wall, and to a long suspension bridge, connecting the two halves of Kargil. On the near side, on the mountain slope among gardens and orchards separated by lanes stands a villa of quaint architecture with arches and pierced screens like a pavilion at some exhibition. This is the residence of the representative of the Maharajah.

The suspension bridge swayed ominously from side to side, and one staggers along it as though drunk. Before the bridge there is a natural dam, so that the water of the river here is as still as in a lake, while below it rages and boils among the stones. Farther on the left bank we had once more to ride along an artificial ledge, a tolerably high one too. In places this ledge has been broken down so that the wall is

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absolutely vertical, and before long the rest of it is sure to go too.

The river valley is very narrow, or rather, there it is a mere cleft through an enormous letter **V**. It bends to the left and the road rises higher and higher among various buildings, for the town really is built vertically, past the post and telegraph office, till we reach an open place where stand two old gnarled apple-trees and the bungalow.

When I examined the site of the town of Kargil I saw that the whole place, houses, gardens, and everything, is situated on an old glacial moraine, broad, but shut in by cliffs. By dint of incredible toil and astonishing skill, the moraine has been divided up and converted into open places, terraces with fields sometimes no bigger than a billiard-table. The fields are bounded by dry stone walls, without clay or mortar but they stand well. The houses are low, not built of stone, but of clay with an admixture of pebbles; the walls are uneven and quite lacking in the neat, well-finished, accuracy and cleanness of the houses in Ladak. The natives are Moslems; they talk Tibetan and understand Hindustani, but nobody understood our Central Asiatic Turki. They wore Indian dress with turbans.

The men of Kargil are engaged in the export trade, and the work falls upon the women. It is interesting to see them coming down from the hills with their loads of *burtse*, firewood, for the size of the bundle is far greater than that of its carrier hidden beneath, giving the effect of great bundles of wood crawling about the hills alone.

The night was warm. In summer, they say, it is as hot here as in India, but in winter very cold, with a great deal of snow. In the morning I was up before the sun. The sky was cloudless, the air fresh, pure and transparent. The sun rose exactly opposite the verandah, the huge, fiery, blazing sun of India, very different from the sun of Tibet.

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The mountains around are wild, sterile, and uninhabited, the villages all placed on just such artificial terraces as Kargil. With us in Semirechie there are quantities of such districts abandoned as useless.

Still, the district of Kargil is considered relatively rich. Higher up, in Ladak, Tibet, and Baltistan, shooting expeditions and travellers are admitted only in restricted numbers on account of the scarcity of foodstuffs, as local supplies would be quickly consumed if there were many visitors. The number of pack-horses per caravan, for instance, is limited to forty.

But sportsmen from India often come to Kargil, which is in good shooting country. They go up to Ladak and Baltistan after markhor, *Capra falconeri*, a much coveted game, which, I may remark, is far from rare with us in Upper Bukhara, in the hills by the river Pendjeh.

In spite of the splendid weather and the warmth, the local folk advised us to hurry, as Zoji-la, the pass into the valley of Kashmir, might be suddenly closed to traffic.

"When it is cloudy with us," they said, "there is sure to be snow on the pass and it will be impossible to get through."

From the bungalow I could see the mouth of the Wakka joining the Suru on the far side opposite Kargil. Down along the river, all the glacial ground is occupied by fields and villages, the houses being on the flanks of the hills, so as not to take up land available for crops. Opposite the mouth of the Wakka on the near side is a fort, below which the two sides are connected by a picturesque bridge of native construction. To do them justice, it is steadier than the suspension bridge of British construction higher up, and much more comfortable to cross. On the far side are the crooked lanes of the bazaar and the closely clustered houses of the natives.

The village was so closely shut in by mountains, so tightly

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packed against the river that it was impossible to see where our road continued. Somehow or other, winding our way through the narrow lanes beyond the bazaar, crossing a brook by a little bridge, we came out on to a ledge and rode down the valley. A few miles farther on we turned to the left, into the valley of the river Dudjibal, which falls into the Suru here. A European suspension bridge crosses the river, hanging on stout stone arches, but swaying pitilessly from side to side when one goes upon it. On the far side, in the heavy shingle of the moraine I could see the mouths of adits, looking just like burrows. Evidently they had been working gold here.

The road to Baltistan crosses by this bridge, but our road goes upstream a few miles and then leaves the river far below, rising up to an alluvial terrace surrounded by huge boulders. Here I saw for the first time wild arbor vitae, *Biota orientalis*, a great ornament to the countryside, and numerous bushes of a special kind of currant, *Ribes leptostachium*, Dne. It was a delight to see these two unfamiliar members of the flora, for I was weary of the monotony of the vegetation for the past weeks.

On the way we met a group of Indians on foot, apparently accompanying some local lady of rank who was mounted. The whole figure of the horsewoman was completely covered in a white veil or sheet, with only a touch of brightness in a glimpse of orange breeches and red slippers with tips turned upwards.

The road was very stony, strewn with boulders, and riding was possible only at a walk. We kept rising higher and higher above the river, past some stone hovels. Here we met an Indian in the striking uniform of a Kashmir officer, riding a first-rate horse with tail docked in the old-fashioned English way.

At the end of the rise there opens a view upon a huge

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deep ravine and a narrow path winding through the middle of a tall, gloomy wall on the left side of the ravine. This scene made me gasp, the great depth of the abyss, the narrow track, and the length of the road to the bottom. Fortunately, this was, at least in part, an optical illusion. The side of the gorge where the path goes is in the shade, and so looks gloomy and steep over the precipice, where the river flows apparently in a bottomless pit. But when you ride on a little the path broadens, the flanks are not quite vertical, and the hillsides are enlivened by plants. Here there are clusters of briar and tamarisk, and at the very top of the ledge there is a small grove of handsome *Thuyas*, a tree which from now onwards becomes more and more abundant.

On rounding the mountain, following the windings of the ravine, we began to drop sharply down to the river. On the left are terraced fields, irrigated by water from a brook tapped somewhere high above.

I had been riding for six hours without stopping, always at a walk, on a rocky road. I was bored, hungry, and tired, so it was a very pleasant surprise when we came unexpectedly upon a bungalow on the banks of the river, with a caravan-serai beyond.

The road we had come by scarcely reflects credit upon the engineers who laid it out. It might have been made by Kirghiz. To round a bluff standing out into the river, they take it right up to the top, when there would be no difficulty in building round or tunnelling through it. The ravine is broad in places and, judging by the marks on the rocks, there would still be room for the road, even when full of water. It is quite unnecessary to fatigue travellers and their animals by dragging them up to the top.

Owing to the thickness of the screes and glacial deposits, it is difficult to recognize the country rock, but at Kargil I

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saw the contact of diorite with shales and on the road there are outcrops of shales, gneiss, and granite. The glacial beds are gold-bearing and in places there are mouths of adits going into the mountains like burrows. The gold-seekers, tracing a vein into the mountain, often leave their bones inside, overwhelmed by a fall of rock. As there is no sign of an outcrop of vein quartz, the gold probably comes out of the granite. I tried panning in the sand of the river and found colours.

The local folk whom we met on the road live in stone huts, are dressed in grey rags, and have a dark complexion, as though they had been smoked, especially the women.

The natives of Kargil also dress in grey in an ample woollen cloak, sometimes with a fringe at the bottom, which they wrap round themselves in a picturesque negligé like a toga.

There were groups of natives on the road, bound for Kashmir in search of work or business, Balti from Skardu. On their backs they were carrying butter in skins and various other articles of produce to sale. When they stop to rest they lean their bundles on special sticks with a round T-shaped prop above to take the weight. They are Shiah Mahommedans, and wear the long lock; there is nothing either of the Mongolian or Turki type in their faces. I noticed a good deal of goitre among them; this trouble is very common in Baltistan, whereas in the Nubra valley, in Ladak, Kashmir, and Gilgit it is seldom seen.

The Balti stop in the caravanserai, where the Kashmiri put up too, regular dandies in long jackets and turbans; they march along with a caravan of pack-horses, keeping up a very smart pace. One, who walked all the way from Leh to Skardu, kept up all the time with my horse.

We were once more at a considerable height, and when we came out on to the road the next morning at eight, all the

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puddles were frozen and my fingers were numbed. Our road lay on the flat all the way to the village of Dras, although we were rising gently all the day, at first without any high ledges to ride over, or buttress walls hanging over precipices and cliffs, all of which I found extremely tiring and nervous work. Everything now pointed to the end of this unpleasant up-and-down road. On the way were many fields artificially irrigated, shrubby plantations, and little houses. We rode through two villages, Tasgam and Danfaltan. Near the latter was a frozen cascade. Then we crossed a second lofty hill with a small glacier on top, the stream of which was tapped for irrigation purposes. It looked as though we were once more entering an alpine region. Before the close of the day our road was through a broad, open plain covered with grass. The mountains receded into the distance and the landscape gave the impression of a steppe, as the trail led through soft grass and dust rose beneath the horses' feet, exactly as in our steppes of Turkestan. From a slight eminence there was a delightful view of the Dras valley. It is encircled by lofty mountains, but the bottom is flat and level. In the distance, near the river, we could see a village, a group of houses in the European style, surrounded by gardens standing out sharply against the greyish-yellow background, the prefecture of Dras.

On reaching the foot of the steep slope, we came unexpectedly upon a building of original design standing alone by a brook. It had a high conical roof, a few high chimneys like turrets, with cowls, no verandah, but everything charming and attractive. This was the bungalow, with the caravanserai behind.

It was very comfortable; there were several bedrooms and a large central hall with a high fireplace in the old-fashioned English style, where one could easily brew a

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good broth in a cauldron or roast a sheep whole. It had all the appearance of a mediaeval European castle transplanted by magic into this Himalayan valley. The resemblance was heightened by the thick layer of dust on the floor and all the furniture, the wind moaning in the chimney, the inevitable draught, and by the quantities of rats as bold as brass. When I sat down to dine they came to the edge of the table and waited, evidently expecting me to invite them to share my frugal meal, while some even climbed on to my shoulders. It only wanted the spectre to complete the illusion, and perhaps one came, but I slept too soundly to see it. It was not nice getting up in the morning, as a cruel icy blast blew in through all the windows and doors. The "castle" was evidently built for summer quarters only, and winter was now on us; it was very cold, and on the peaks beyond the river fresh snow had already fallen.

From here the road runs straight to Astor, seven days ride over a poor road through country with plenty of grass and trees. In the wall of a field near by there stand some stone pillars with the figures of Indian gods. The Forsyth Expedition noticed them here, and they were photographed by the de Filippi Expedition. Francke considers them Buddhist.

The valley of the Dras is well watered with numerous streams and brooks, fed by springs on the mountain slopes, and vegetation is much richer and more varied than in the valley of the Suru. The road passes the ruins of an old fort, over a feeder of the Dras by a fine wooden bridge, and drops into a ravine, where the river flows just as though in a deep canal excavated in the olivine, but the road, heaven knows why, rises high above the valley along a rocky spur. Here I met a missionary, the Rev. Dr. Kunig. It turned out that he was riding the very same chestnut loper that came down under me in Kashgar and almost crippled me for life. Then

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the road avoids a gorge by a rather nasty built-up cornice and again drops to the bottom of the valley.

Clumps of creeping juniper appear and the islands in the river are covered with shrubs. In the lateral nullahs and villages I could detect old moraines at one moment, at the next glaciers high up among the peaks, in others again there was snow already. Where the road was in shadow it was frozen.

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CHAPTER XIII

AT LAST!

A FEW miles farther we left the valley of the Dras and climbed the slope of a low, small ridge, and reached the bungalow and caravanserai on a hill at a place called Mashai. Here we were definitely in the higher alpine region, and the boundary of vegetation and the surrounding district resembled, for instance, the peaks of Monte Generoso or Mont Pilatus in Switzerland. To the south of the bungalow we could see the snowy peaks of some range visible in the far distance, with snowfields and glacier creeping down the head of a steep gully, which passed behind the bungalow. In this gully there are two large two-storied houses in the style of a Swiss châlet and one lower building. Around everything bare and barren. These houses are the winter quarters of the telegraph clerk and parties in charge of the road. To the north there rose a steep cliff, where the Dras flows, and beyond there rises abruptly a steep mountain with jagged outline against the sky. In the spring, when the alpine pastures and flowers are out, this should be a very pleasant spot. The glacier is not far from the bungalow and is quite accessible. Evening fell. A cold wind sprang up, howling in the chimney, and I could hear the roar of the Dras. I shivered, drew myself up close to the blazing fire and thought of to-morrow's ride.

To-morrow we are leaving these inhospitable heights, plateaux, cornices, and dropping into the valley of Kashmir through the pass famous from antiquity, Zoi-la, Zodji-la, Zoi-bal or Zoi-djal. We have to ride only seventeen miles to Sonamarg, which is within the forest area of Kashmir. To-morrow I am expecting a complete change in the aspect of

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nature, vegetation, and climate. What an intense relief to think that I am at the goal of my wanderings, that I have reached the vale of Kashmir, of which I have read so much and pondered over from my most youthful years, that I have reached it at last, five years since that cold January night in 1919 when I walked out of my home town, Tashkent.* The time taken on my journey is comparable with that spent by Marco Polo, and the means employed the same, on foot and on the backs of horses, and of yaks.

The picture of nature which unfolded itself before my eyes on the day following this short seventeen-mile stage surpassed all my expectations.

Following the bank of the river by a stony, badly kept track, we rode up to the picturesque hill which had been visible from the bungalow. Here the ravine widens and forms an open space covered with turf where three streams meet, forming between them the upper reaches of the Dras. There is a telegraph station on the left of the road, quite pleasing in appearance, built of slabs of shale of different colours over a wooden frame. The day was sunny and bright, the air fresh, with a gently balmy breeze. The valley bent to the right, and here the scene was really springlike; broad patches of snow, some thawed into puddles, some lying here and there at the foot of the hills. Our horses were careful to walk round it, knowing from experience that there may well be chasms under the crust. On the sunny side fresh green grass was growing, with brilliant golden buttercups, while on the far side of this little basin there stands a whole spinney of stunted birch, *Betula bhojputra*, Wall, which had already shed their leaves. On the left a small but picturesque waterfall gushed out of a narrow gulley to form a rivulet. There is nothing to show that this is at an altitude of 11,300 feet, that we are crossing the crest of the Himalayas. This is the

* v. *Hunted through Central Asia*, p. 35.

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usual picture in spring in any small mountain valley in Scotland or in the foothills of the Urals. There was nothing to warn us of the splendid and impressive panorama awaiting us. We were standing at the summit of the "Zaskar range, which, skirting the southern edge of the upland plains of Deosai in Baltistan, divides them from the valley of Kashmir and continues to Nanga Parbat (26,630 feet), and beyond that mountain stretches to the north of Swat and Bajour."

We crossed to the left bank of a small stream, climbed a hill and dropped through the snow which here filled the basin, and crossed back to the right bank. Here I noticed with satisfaction that the water was flowing towards the west, for but a few yards back it had been flowing to the east, so the watershed is imperceptible, although dividing the two great basins of the rivers Sind and Indus. The little brook which we had just crossed twice was the source of the river Sind.

The little hollow deepened rapidly. The right side was grown over with stunted birch. Suddenly there was a sharp turn to the right, and there opened before our gaze a picture of bottomless precipices. My breath was taken away at the view that met my eyes. The hollow plunge abruptly into an abyss, from which huge cliffs rear themselves sheer to heaven. The clayey flanks of the hollow pass into dark shales cleaving vertically, and the cornice turns into an artificial buttress road, a mere wall hanging over the abyss, the flanks of which come closer together and appear more and more formidable. The trail narrows even more, contouring the cliffs in zigzags, passes under an overhanging rock so low that a tall horseman could hardly ride beneath. The sheer, lofty forbidding face of the cliff relentlessly encloses the ravine, while the trail rises ever steeper and then suddenly plunges into the pit. It is nerve-racking even to walk, for you feel every moment that you will overbalance and crash

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down. A belt of snow runs down in the corner to the left, like a band of white mourning against the sombre background of the cliffs. Everything is picturesque in its own imposing grandeur. When at length you reach the summit of the cliff, where the cornice-road seems to plunge down into the precipice, the gorge once more makes a turn at right-angles and . . . comes to an end! It is an astonishing scene. You are standing over a bottomless pit, to the right, to the left and ahead there is only empty space. Down below, far, far beneath, lies the vale of Kashmir, with its streams and rivers, its forests and hills covered with pine forests, their snowy peaks, their glaciers, breaking the outline of the rocky crests with silver bands. The indescribable panorama took my breath away.

On the right, on the vertical face of the cliff, the trail winds on to a hardly discernible cornice. It inspires a feeling of pain by its giddy height, its narrowness, and its unending length. The face of the cliff, sombre and gloomy, describes a wide crescent and disappears into the precipices. Such was our road into the smiling vale of Kashmir.

I dismounted and walked down this vertiginous track, partly because I had not sufficient confidence in my horse, which was liable to shy if some animal or a bird jumped up at its feet, and a shy in a place like that meant for both of us a dive two thousand feet into the basin of Kashmir. Besides, farther on, when the cliffs had lost some of their terrible character, and we entered the zone of vegetation, it was as interesting as pleasant to walk and note the striking contrast with the scene we had just left. Here was the southern flora, here was still summer, flowers, berries; the lower we went, the greater the luxuriance and variety of plant life, with grass, herbs, and shrubs covering the whole face of the mountain, a picture that I had not feasted my eyes upon for several years.

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Among the rocks there grew sage, *Geranium pratense*, with great big flowers, while in the moist meadows the ground was covered with a thick carpet of dark blue forget-me-nots, while here and there a columbine, *Aquilegia vulgaris*, stood out, and gentians, *G. marginata*, Grisel., and the soft soil of the hillsides was covered with the feather grass of the steppe, *Stipa sibirica*. But what delighted me most of all was the sight of the dark red strawberries peeping out among the rocks; this was not the common wild strawberry of our European woodlands, but a real garden, sweet, fragrant Muscadel strawberry of the foothills of the Urals, a delightful fruit too seldom met with in gardens.

I picked a few flowers, dried them, and sent this little bouquet from the heights of the Himalayas to my family in distant Russia, but I afterwards learnt they were never received.

On the way down we met a caravan of Kashgar Sarts returning to their homes from performing the hadj to Mecca. There was one woman, wrapped up from head to foot. After the civil and friendly wayside greetings of the Tibetans and Indians, these surly Kashgar folk made a bad impression.

It was noon when we reached the bungalow in the valley at a place called Baltal, but we rode on without stopping. Our road was now on the level, through a forest of leafless trees and pines with long, soft needles, or through green fields covered with feather grass; at times it followed the banks of a stream. There were pines on the left bank, and firs on the right. At the head of the ravine there rises a massive limestone mountain with the vertical sides as smooth as though they had been polished.

The dense forest, the pines and firs, the shrubs and thick grass, the currants on the river banks, all spoke eloquently of another country and another climate, very different from that

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of Central Asia. It reminded me rather of the southern Urals, but never of Turkestan. Here, although the autumn was well advanced, the vegetation became more varied and denser as we went down.

The valley broadened out, and it was quite unexpectedly that we came upon a village of wooden houses standing in a hollow on the high bank above the river. I rubbed my eyes and imagined myself back in Russia! Only, the houses were of strange design, with steep, high wooden roofs. Turning to the right over a fine wooden bridge we crossed the Sind, climbed a little and came to a bungalow at the foot of the hill covered with pines, firs, and thick grass. Behind the bungalow, on the far side of the river, stood a lofty limestone hill, capriciously weathered out into gorges and gullies and hollows. Black crows were flying overhead, not our Central Asiatic, but an unfamiliar species.

In the yard of the bungalow I had a pleasant surprise, horses with English saddles and a couple of native servants, one fair, the other black. Presently there came out of one of the rooms two ladies, in town dress and hats, and sat down to lunch on the verandah. While I was civilizing myself with a shave and a wash, the Indian telegraph clerk, who brought me a wire from Mr. Skrine from Gilgit, told me that these were two American ladies travelling to Baltal to see Zoji-la, also that the pass would be closed in two weeks. As soon as the snow falls it is impossible to get through, and it is necessary to wait for the severe frosts of winter, which lock the waters of the rivers and make possible the road through the gorge below and the climb up to the pass by the frozen cascades of the rivers. I can well imagine what a pure joy it must be to climb up the ice to Zoji-la in mid-winter!

After lunch the two ladies went out. The cook, I do not know whether with or without the knowledge of the fair tourists, made mine the present of some cucumbers and

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sweet potatoes, a much appreciated addition to my scanty meal.

Here, at Sonamarg, tourists often come from Srinagar in summer. As a matter of fact the whole road from Baltal to Srinagar by the valley of the Sind is extremely interesting and picturesque.

Down here the bungalows are not so well kept as they are in Tibet, and everywhere in the villages there is more rubbish and dirt.

The morning before we left Sonamarg something went wrong with my horse; it seemed sick and fagged. A nasty scratch which it had had in Kashgar, and which I had doctored on the road, suddenly became inflamed, and I had to apply a hot compress and lead it. I mounted a little chestnut Tibetan pony. It had strong legs and carried me well in spite of my thirteen stone. These Tibetan ponies do not often get corn.

The whole road is very picturesque. To the south a lofty range is covered with thick pine forest with glaciers glistening in the rocky peaks, while lower down and on the northern side deciduous trees prevail, with birch, walnut, *Juglans regia*, maple, apples, and Spanish chestnut, *Castanea vesca*, a tall plant with bright orange berries, and a shrub quite new to me.

For about three miles the road follows the bank of the Sind, through the forest, sometimes by the side of the river, which foams and leaps among the rocks, at times rising high to avoid projecting bluffs, through thick forest vegetation of a type that was new and interesting to me. This was teeming with an abundance of life, like the forests of moist countries. It was indeed a startling contrast to the highly original, miserable *tugrak* thickets of the plain of Kashgar, where everything—soil, wood, and even leaves are saturated with salt. The ground consists of shales, and their sharp edges

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are very trying for the horses' feet as they crop out along the road. Where the ravine broadens out into the valley the pines become fewer and huge isolated walnut-trees commoner, the space between them occupied by *Caragana*, while the Kashmir dipper, *Cinclus cashmiriensis*, fluttered brightly about among the stones in the river, the same species which we have in Turkestan and the mountain streams of the southern Urals.

Presently signs of agriculture appear. Fields become commoner, surrounded by stone walls. With them, black buffaloes and big white zebus, typical Indian cattle, which tell me at once in what land I am.

In the fields there are great bundles of hay stacked between the branches of the trees that stand here and there, winter food for the cattle, which give the country a very strange appearance. Hazel bushes grow along the banks of the river, with clusters of wild currants, gooseberries and *Ailanthus*, which is perhaps introduced here, and plenty of elms and willows.

We rode through a village of houses built of wood and stone mixed, with everything terribly dirty and smoky; evidently the houses are kept warm by open fire, for even the children have a smoky complexion. Around the houses there was mud and dirt that would do credit to a Russian village. Crossing the river by a bridge, we rode at the foot of the hills, past fields which here occupy all the bottom of the valley. The chief crop is maize. Then out into another village, entirely in the shade of immense trees. There is a curious construction in these villages resembling the "hut on chickens' legs" of our Russian stories, something like a building on piles. As a matter of fact they are barns. In one yard the natives were threshing with flails, in the old-fashioned Russian way; I was interested to see that the corn was buckwheat, *Fagopyrum esculentum*, a favourite food in

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Central and Northern Russia, where it is served in the form of *kasha*, famous in literature, and in a kind of pancake, an indispensable dish for our butter-week before Lent. How strange that here in the valley of the Sind, on the threshold of Kashmir, I should come across three things famous in our Russian tradition, the "hut on chickens' legs," our beloved buckwheat, and now I may add our "Fire-Bird," the *Zhar Ptitsa* of our mythology, which I consider undoubtedly the monal, *Lophophorus*, one species of which, the Impeyan pheasant, *L. impeyanus*, a magnificent bird, is a native of Kashmir. There can hardly be another bird in the world to which this name would be more fittingly applied, for the plumage of *Lophophorus* has a blazing metallic lustre and the neck and breast glow like red-hot coal. Folklorists maintain that it is the original of our myth. The story is that after fearful perils the bold Ivan Tsarevich and Ivanushka-Durak, riding "Koniok Gorbunok," the humpback horse, travelled through twenty-nine countries into the thirtieth empire to secure the wonderful Fire-Bird. These old myths are strangely like the truth, if one has the key to read them. Do they not show that popular memory has preserved the tradition of expeditions at the very dawn of history by the inhabitants of the plains of eastern Europe into the valley of Kashmir, where the road must have led through Badakshan or Bukhara and the Hindu Kush? Surely the humpback horse must be the camel, and the fire-bird is the monal.

Beyond the village the road climbed higher and higher till it reached a bluff jutting into the valley, which here is somewhat narrowed and squeezed in by rocky mountains. A cornice road is hewn in the rock, but of ample width and with a parapet. If only all cornices were of that type on the road from Kök Yar to Srinagar! Then it drops by an easy gradient back into the valley. A stream flows into the Sind,

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the right bank of which is tapped for irrigation of the fields and plantations of the local village, which is almost concealed by immense walnut-trees. We rode through the village, Gund-Gaganjir, into the yard of a small bungalow inhabited by mice and millions of flies. Between the bungalow and the river were three immense walnut-trees, and on the far side there rose a hill entirely covered with forest, pine above, deciduous below, the golden autumn tints of the latter standing out very effectively against the sombre background of the pines and firs. The previous day I had seen the trees had already shed their foliage, but here, lower down the valley, they were only just turning in the first frosts of autumn. They told me that there were plenty of deer and boar in these forests.

Our Tibetan caravan encamped in the shade of a huge walnut. It made a pleasing picture, the little horses, the Tibetans silently preparing their tea-broth round the camp fire, the packs all laid out neatly in a row, the two great Tibetan dogs lying near their masters' property to guard it against any interfering strangers in this strange land.

On the road we met two picturesque Kashmiri riding fine upstanding horses, and a caravan of pilgrims returning from Mecca, among whom I recognized some Sarts I knew in Kashgar. They were delighted to see a familiar face and stopped and had a chat, when they told me all the wonders they had seen in India, which they were visiting for the first time.

My horse was now feeling the strain. He could hardly walk, and eventually lay down, rolling over on to his side, the head hanging helplessly on the ground. I at once had a pile of straw put under his head and a good thick cloth thrown over him. I spent the whole of that night in considerable alarm, as the animal was off his feed, lying all the time on his side, and I expected him to die at any moment. I went out to have

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a look at him several times during the night, and always found him in the same abandoned attitude, but in the very early morning when I went to have a look, he had pulled himself together a little and was on his legs again, and whinnied when he saw me. I told them to give him some water and hay, and he at once began to eat. The food put him right and he stepped out quite well after that. It seems that the animal had been eating some herb that grows at Sonamarg, which had found its way into the hay, which is not really poisonous but has a temporary intoxicating effect; the local horses know it and avoid it. This was the last disagreeable experience for my unfortunate horses on that terrible road from Yarkand to Srinagar.

All the same, I decided not to ride my own horse that day, but to take a Tibetan one; I had to try two or three before I found one that could carry me. It was a bright and fresh morning, and we rode all the time through fields, numerous villages, past great walnut-trees on which often enough there were great clumps of mistletoe, and here I saw two trees very familiar to me in Turkestan, the white mulberry, *Morus albus*, and the nettle- or ironwood-tree, *Celtis australis*.

A pleasant twittering and warbling issued from the bushes, although it was late autumn. By one house standing near the road, decorated with arabesques, huge old planes were growing. Villages and isolated houses became more and more frequent. In one of the villages, hidden away under an avenue of shady trees, was a curious little shop too small for a customer to enter, so that he had to remain outside, while the shopkeeper sat inside, perched up high above the counter, a precaution against shop-lifters.

The natives produced an odd impression on me; they seemed to me to be not quite gipsies and not quite Persians. Elegantly draped in their togas, with sandals on their feet, but bare-legged, they reminded me rather of the evangelists

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and saints of our icons. Their extensive paddy fields were very well laid out and there were quantities of buffaloes.

We rode on through a broad valley where the trees were so numerous that it was almost a forest, and about midday came to a pretty stone bungalow surrounded by a wooden wall. This place is called Kangan.

Here a very pleasant surprise was waiting for me. At the end of a long verandah a lady was sitting, and near her, apparently, a young man with a rifle in his hand. The lady greeted me, so I was emboldened to go up and introduce myself, when I found to my astonishment that what I took for a young man was a girl. They were Americans, Mrs. and Miss A., who had been travelling about India two years, and now arrived in Kashmir, attracted by the reputation of its beauty and the sport it offers. They invited me to join them at lunch and it was a change indeed for me to spend a couple of hours in such society. Miss A. very soon showed that she knew what she was talking about when we discussed shooting, weapons, and horses. She was very interested in my horse, and noticed at once some characteristic features of our Central Asiatic breeds.

This chance acquaintance with these two charming Americans made a great impression on me. There is no race in the world except the Anglo-Saxon whose women would be capable of undertaking such a trip to a far country, without the help of any men, taking their shooting quite seriously, and yet not losing any of their own feminine charm. They gave me some interesting papers, which I eagerly devoured all that evening.

The next day was my last stage to Srinagar. At first the character of the valley remained the same, but farther on, when we had crossed a pile of glacial boulders, it broadened out to offer a view over the broad plain of Srinagar, encircled by lofty crests. It looks as though the entire valley was

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covered with forest. Leaden clouds hung over the distant mountains.

Then we crossed the Sind by a suspension bridge, and followed the road under the shade of huge trees. It was wide here, fit for motor traffic, and we met plenty of movement: men on horseback and men on foot, laden beasts, and the little booths and stalls by the roadside, as with us in Central Asia. Something reminded me of the home I had left: the tall willows bordering the road, the irrigation canals and the paddy fields, only these are not divided into small squares as with us, but into big fields, evenly divided by horizontal planes; but the buildings and houses are of a different type, for there is none of the loess so characteristic of Central Asia, nor the arid climate, so that houses are built of stone or brick and the roofs are not flat, but steeply sloping, thatched with grass or rushes.

Standing out from the rest of the vegetation like tall watch-towers, the huge columns of plane-trees offer a shade where a hundred men or more can rest. Their foliage now had a rosy tint from the first autumn breezes. The natives manage to burn charcoal out of these leaves.

The slopes of the foothills are covered with bush and every patch of land that is not cultivated is overgrown with solid thickets of irises. What a picture of fairyland this must offer in spring, when the flowers are in full bloom!

We arrived at the last bungalow on the road, in the village of Gangarbal, almost without realizing it. Here a car was waiting for me, sent out from Srinagar to fetch me by Mr. Skrine. What a thoughtful friend!

Mr. and Mrs. Skrine had already arrived from Kashgar by the military road through Gilgit, which is shorter and easier than the Tibetan route, but, of course, much less interesting.

And so it was the little village of Gangarbal that saw

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the end of my long ride from Kashgar and the six-year odyssey on foot and in the saddle from Tashkent to India.

The car took me for some time through fields and then past fenced-in orchards and gardens, round a bluff crowned with an old castle, then into the native faubourg with narrow, winding lanes, brick houses with two or three stories, windows with lattice shutters instead of glass, and steep roofs without fronts, looking as though there had been a fire, little shops with all sorts of native goods for sale.

Slovenliness and dirt on every side, so typical of the East, yet peculiar and picturesque. The high houses of red brick, the balconies, the quaint shutters, the steep roofs sharply distinguish the native architecture of Srinagar from that of the cities of Central Asia, with their low houses of raw brick, flat roofs, and blind walls, with no windows opening upon the street. There was electric light everywhere and no doubt it was quite cheap, as I saw lamps burning in the shops in broad daylight. I saw taps too. Taps . . . that means water laid on! What a contrast with Tashkent and Samarkand, for to this day there is no public water-supply in all the towns of Turkestan. For thirty years the "City Fathers" of Tashkent had been discussing and debating upon the most convenient and economic form of water-supply, but they never got beyond the stage of talk. Samarkand actually did have it in the seventh century, as the Arab geographers testify, but in the twentieth century the inhabitants drink water from the dirty irrigation canals.

While these thoughts were passing through my mind, the car drove into the European quarter of the city, the city garden, splendidly laid out and charming to see. Long avenues of handsome trees, broad playing-fields covered with turf, flower beds, villas. The car drove into the gates of the Residency, the home of the representative of the British Government, gates like those of a mediaeval

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castle. Within, a garden full of tropical plants, against the background afforded by the hill of Tahta-i-Suleiman, with the old Hindu temple on top and a whole sea of magnificent chrysanthemums of every conceivable colour and shade.

The Venice of the East was to me a delight. The charming views, the grand old gardens, the European comfort, the lakes, the Jhelum, the canals, the houseboats, in one of which I took up my abode.

Here I saw the ancient, peculiar, wonderful land of the East, the exuberance of Nature and the fruit of the colonizing genius of the British people, that introduced order and the comfort of European civilization, taste and distinction, into this wonderful Himalayan valley.

When, after my long martyrdom, I reached the "bourjui" city of Kashgar from that gloomy sepulchre of the living called the Socialistic Soviet Republic of Turkestan, where I had spent two years of misery, it seemed to me that I had at length awakened from a long and terrible nightmare.

And now, after the mediaeval life of Kashgar, and the deserts of Central Asia, the heights of the Karakoram, the gorges and abysses of the Himalayas, Srinagar seemed too good to be true, a beautiful dream. I could not believe that I was really here.

I had scarcely arrived when I received an invitation to tea from Lady Wood, wife of the British Resident. And when I walked into that beautifully furnished room, ablaze with flowers, my eyes fell with delight upon a picture that recalled my home . . . a silver Russian samovar!

When I sat down to the tea-table with Mr. and Mrs. Skrine, and our hostess poured out tea, then I felt just that same feeling which the hero of our old Russian folk tale must have felt when, after many years of tribulation and wandering in far lands, at length he enjoyed the abounding hospitality of the Princess of India!

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CONCLUSION

WHEN my mind passes in review the immense distances of the mountains of Asia and the vast plains, from the southern Urals to the vales of Kashmir, which I had seen and learnt to know so well, I cannot resist a little philosophizing.

The first question that springs to my mind is this: How and where did the fauna and flora of the northern lands pass over into the subtropical nature? Where does the ethnographical frontier run? What are the differences in character between the mountains of the north and those of the south, of that massive rampart that separates the northern plains of Turkestan from those of the Punjab?

The forest-clad hills of the Urals pass into the fertile, undulating steppes of the Pri-Ural and Western Siberia. To the south, the steppes pass into the semi-deserts and true deserts of Turkestan. This broad belt of steppe country and desert country separates the fauna and flora of the north from those of the south, and divides two distinct ethnic worlds. The old Issedoni of the Ural, the Finnish tribes of the Bashkir, Teptars, Chuvash, and others, are separated by the belt of steppes from the Aryan tribes, that is, of the true Persian type, who inhabit the mountains and part of the foothills of Turkestan.

Of course, I exclude the intrusive Russian element completely, the penetration of which into Central Asia began less than a century ago, and consider only the ethnographic constituents of the population as formed from the highest antiquity, which existed until the inclusion of these countries in the general European-Asiatic network of steam communications.

Arriving from the north through the steppe, the traveller in Turkestan found a totally different world, a different

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Nature, population, manner of life, highly peculiar culture totally different from anything he had seen before, although the religion, Islam, remained the same, and, too, the language, the Djagatai dialect, which is perfectly comprehensible to a native of the Ural. The steppe belt, while separating two totally distinct settled populations, has its own very characteristic population of nomad Turki, with their own, ancient, peculiar culture, original manner of life and one of the most ancient languages of the world, Scythian, contemporary of Greek, Latin, and perhaps Sanskrit. This wandering population of Turki, descendants of the Scythians, moved freely about the steppes and plains of Asia and Europe, overthrowing empires, founding new peoples, leaving the traces of their influence on the life, customs, and blood of the inhabitants, especially in the south and more attractive countries. The culture of Turkestan, arising in the desert foothills, thanks to artificial irrigation, has very great antiquity and has resemblances with the culture of Persia and Northern India. One may in fact say that the world of Indo-Persia begins at Tashkent. Nature, in the mountains which occupy Central Asia, remains almost unaltered throughout a vast area, for there is little difference in the animal and vegetable world of that huge territory. The desert mountains of the Alai and Trans-Alai ranges differ but little from the Kuen Lun. The valleys of Karategin, the Vallis Commedarum of the Romans, and Baldjuan are like those of the upper Indus. Darvaz resembles Baltistan, the plateaux of the Pamirs are like those of the Karakoram and Tibet, and the valley of the upper reaches of the Sind recalls those of Yuldus and Narynköl in the Tian Shan. The general type of the inhabitants of these mountain valleys is the so-called Aryan, or Ancient Persian type, modified more or less by admixture of Turki blood, sometimes still retaining the pure features of *Homo alpinus*.

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Conclusion

So we see that it is not mountain ranges that form a marked frontier between Nature and the peoples of India and the countries of the north, but the broad belt of the steppes. The purely tropical Nature of India begins only at the last crest of the Himalayas in Kashmir, which is cut by the river Jhelum.

And so too in history. Turkestan, Persia, and Northern India are closely connected. The steppe area of Central Asia plays in history the same role as an arm of the sea separating the land and cultures, and at the same time permitting the inter-communication, commerce, invasions, and raids.

Tibet the mysterious stands apart in history, well secluded from the rest of the world by the impassable walls of the loftiest mountains in the world.

The names of Kuen Lun, Karakoram, and Himalayas should not provoke in the eye of the reader the conception of separated and disconnected ranges, such as the Appenines, the Hartz, Urals, or Tian Shan. While it is possible in the mountain systems of Central Asia to recognize certain definite ranges, such as the Alai, the other names, such as Kuen Lun, Karakoram, and Himalayas are purely conventional. It is a labyrinth of mountains, valleys, ravines, and plateaux, which it is quite impossible to divide off into constituent parts. The only sharply defined lines in it are the valleys of the great rivers, which cut through the mountain mass.

Finally, I cannot refrain from commenting upon a historical "mistake" of the famous geographer of the nineteenth century, A. Humboldt. As is well known, he suggested the existence of a *meridional* range of mountains in Central Asia, connecting the systems of the Tian Shan with that of the Himalayas, to which he proposed the name Bolor Dagh. It was eventually shown that no such north and south range exists, and the name Bolor Dagh was quite unknown to the

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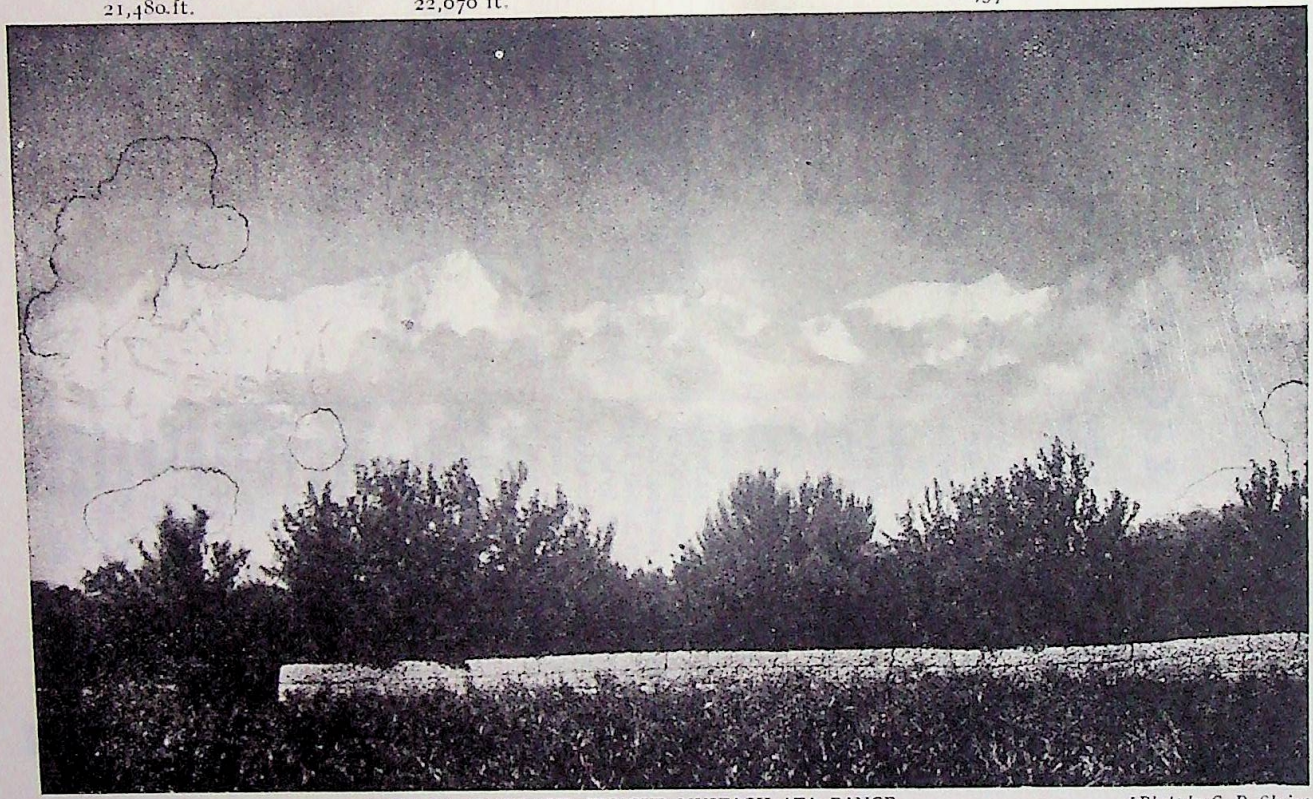
natives. This range then disappeared from the map, just as the volcanoes of Central Asia disappeared. Still, the great man was right. A meridional range of elevation in the geological sense does not exist, but does in the orographical sense. For what else is the granite chain of Chakragil, the group of Kungur, Mustagh-Ata and their southerly extension, where they blend with the mountains on the Raskem Daryá, that is, with the known range of Kuen Lun?

From the plain of Kashgar this gigantic wall 18–20,000 feet high, is clearly visible, extending along the meridian, bounding the road on the west. Only in two or three places by narrow defiles can the traveller penetrate through this crest from the Kashgar plain to the plateau of the Pamirs.

In the photographs attached to the work of C. P. Skrine (*Chinese Central Asia*, by C. K. Skrine: Methuen) this crest is clearly illustrated with its details.

The orographical term "range" does not comprise necessarily the sense of a tectonic range; it is by no means necessary that it should owe its existence to a geological uplift, or folding; it may not be there, or may be there in another form, just as a geological range may be destroyed by erosion or hidden under sediments, just as the cretaceous deposits conceal the interval between the Ural and range of Mugozhar, converting mountains into an elevated steppe.

Would it not be only fair and just to restore to the map of Central Asia the mountain range put there by Humboldt, and call the granite chain Chakragil-Kungur-Mustagh-Ata by the name of the great geographer?



PART OF CHAKRAGIL-KUNGUR-MUSTAGH-ATA RANGE [*Photo by C. P. Skrine*

VIEW FROM GEZ RIVER VALLEY SOUTH OF TOKUR AK, KASHGAR DISTRICT (TELEPHOTO)

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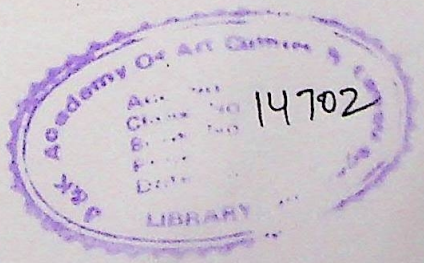

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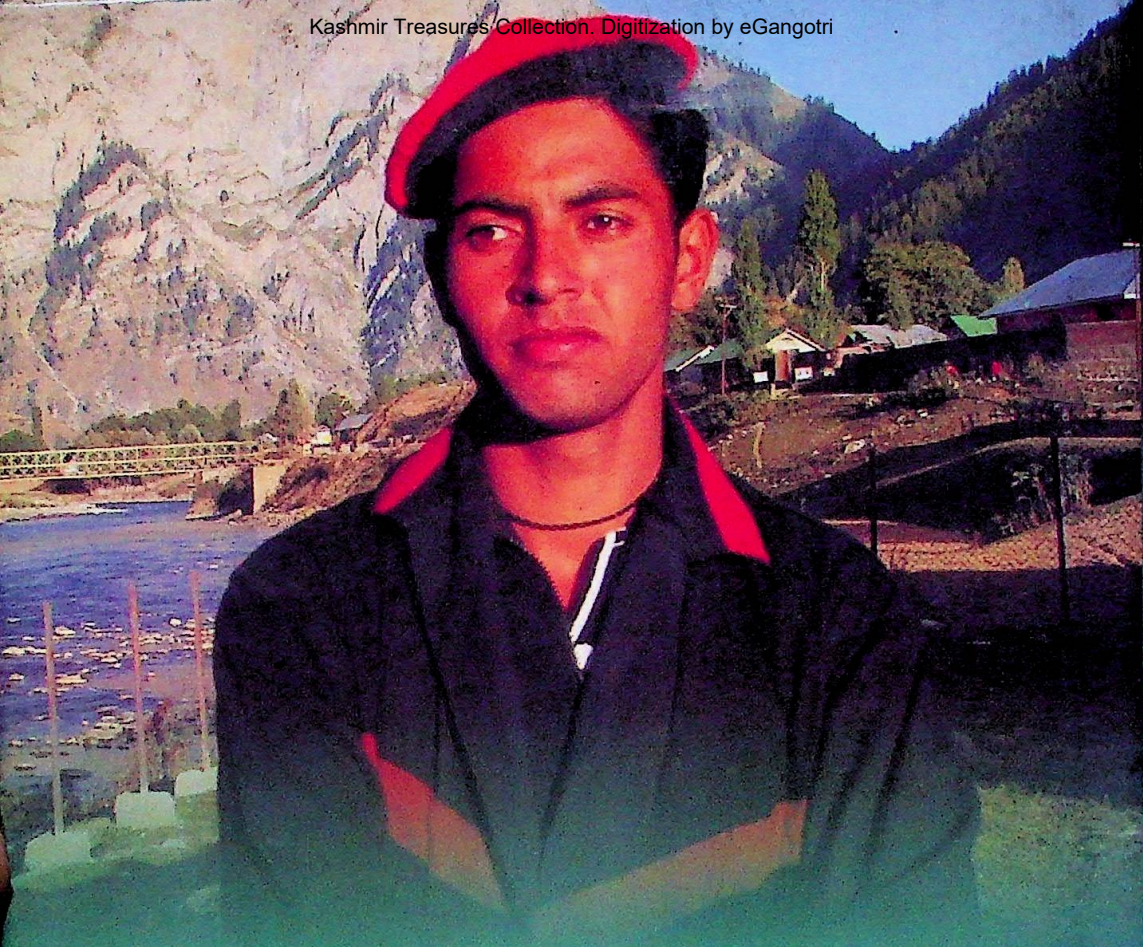

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